

ISSUES OF IDENTITY  
IN FESTIVAL, SONG, AND SOCIAL DISCOURSE  
ON ARUBA, DUTCH CARIBBEAN

by  
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May 1998

A dissertation submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate School of State  
University of New York at Buffalo  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## Cododo

## Acknowledgments

I am most grateful to the people of Aruba for their valuable insights and contributions towards this study on the cultures, carnival and music of Aruba. A special *masha danki* goes to those individual consultants who invited me into their homes to participate and observe first hand the cultural and social complexity of Aruba's social world: to Bibi and Vanessa Arends, Harry and Ligia Croes, Crispin and Dorothy Bruce, Lydia Emerencia and Errol Sjak-Shie, Pancho and Myok Geerman, Charles "Lord Cobashi" and Emily Groeneveldt, and Sylvia and Franklin Lourens. Today, I am proud to call these people friends.

I would also like to thank the following people who so generously shared their knowledge and thoughts on the festivals and music of Aruba with me: Clarita Arends, Calvin Assang, Nene Arends, Albert "Ebby" Arends, Mario Arends, Melrose Chase, Emile de Cuba, Cheung Kong Ming, Aura Croes, Lucas Croes, Milo Croes, Mito Croes, Robertico Croes, Evelino Fingal, John Flemming, Carlos de Freitas, Adira Halley, Bertha Janga, Roland Kelly, Vicente Kelly, Burt Kennedy, R. Maldonado, Alphonse Mirep, Roy "Lord Cachete" Lintz, Julie Oduber, Rudi Oduber, Vanya Oduber, Carla Paris, Claudius "Mighty Talent" Phillips, Brian "Byam" Robins, Adolpho "Chippy" Richardson, Modesto Ruiz, Monica Saladin, Astrid Salazar, Ramon Sharpe, Marcia Stamper, Ito Tromp, Ovito Tromp, and William "Woody" Woodley, and to all those others who so generously kindly gave their generous Aruban hospitality to this would-be-*carnavalista*! Sadly, three of the consultants who contributed to this work have since passed away. These are Edgar Connor, Yrad "Lord Boxoe" Illidge, and Julio Maduro.

A special thanks must go to Lydia Emerencia for her wonderful insights into Aruban culture, and for her help with the native language, Papiamentu. Thanks go also to my Dutch friends, Liberta and Wiger Ter Weeme for helping with Dutch translation, lending me their car, and for plying me with some mind-numbing cocktails through difficult times. To you both I say *dank u wel* and *proost!* And I am deeply grateful to my husband, Sam Cole, for his encouragement and support through the past seven years and for reading and commenting on my various writings on this topic.

Thank you to my thesis committee: to Charles Frake who reminded me of the ways in which history, both mythic and real, can shape the present. To Don Pollock who encouraged my interest in the life of signs which provided a valuable lens in the field. And finally, I am most grateful to my advisor, Barbara Tedlock, for encouraging me to use my instincts as an artist and come from the center, for opening my senses to the poetics of people and places, and for her insightful comments and guidance through the years.

Support for part of this research has come from the National Science Foundation of the United States and the National Center for Earthquake Engineering Research during a term as a Research Associate of the Center for Regional Studies at the University at Buffalo. I acknowledge the following for allowing the reproduction of their photographs in this dissertation: Checkpoint Color, Bibi Arends, and *Bon dia Aruba/Aruba Today*.

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Buffalo, New York

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**Aruba**

## Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the nature of native identity on the Dutch Caribbean Island of Aruba. Aruba is geographically and culturally located between the Caribbean and Latin America. A plural society, with a hybrid native population and several other distinct ethnic groups, the Island has a complex demographic history. Whilst not seeking independence for a variety of pragmatic reasons, Aruba desires greater political, economic, and cultural autonomy. This goal is accompanied by increasing nationalism, guided by the articulation and deployment of a native culture.

Although identities are expressed at group, regional, and national levels, this dissertation concerns the articulation of the so-called "real" or "native" Aruban identity, as it is located within several arenas of social, political, and cultural performance. The concept of "nativeness" is denoted is through Indian heritage, social behavior, somatic characteristics, and juridical ties to the land. In the area of education, a growing native critique of colonial Dutch education system is calling for a greater use of the native language Papiamentu, and for the re-conceptualization and re-structuring of the school curriculum in native rather than outsider terms. Representations of nativeness are expressed also as ideals and stereotypes, and use characteristics of behavior, language, and somatics, as negative or positive markers. The notion of physical place too reveals a marked autochthonous discourse.

In the sphere of festival performance, music genres associated with the English-speaking Afro-Arubans and the Indo-Euro-Latin American Arubans draw attention to ethnic difference through their marked aesthetic sensibilities. Between New Year and carnival, thematic festival performances speak heuristically about the past and the loss of tradition. They are presented by an older native generation to a younger generation and from a traditional conservative population to a modern metropolitan one.

The general relevance of this thesis for the topic of cultural identity is in the exegesis of the mechanisms through which native Arubans culturally adapt to demographic change. This analysis contributes to a theoretical understanding of the politics of culture, and of the processes involved in the crafting of identity in all societies as they engage with an increasingly interconnected world.

## Figure 1.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

My first contact with the Island of Aruba in the Dutch Antilles began in 1981 when my husband Sam was appointed senior planning consultant to the Island government. We lived there for two years with my daughter Yanina, and then with our son Toby who was born in the capital, Oranjestad. Since departing the Island in 1983, we have made several return visits. I began my initial fieldwork on Aruba in 1990 when I stayed for a period of six months. I returned seven times on a series of shorter visits between 1991 and 1996, each lasting three to eight weeks. I completed my research in January of 1996.

The Island of Aruba lies just eighteen miles off the northern shore of Venezuela. Although geographically located in the Caribbean, Aruba's cultural spheres of influence lie between the Caribbean, Europe, North America, and Latin America. Until recently, Aruba was a part of the Netherlands Antilles. St. Maarten, St. Eustatius and Saba formed the Dutch Windward Islands, while Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao formed the Dutch Leeward Islands. The two groups are separated by 600 miles which accounts for their lack of social and economic integration. Whilst remaining a colony of Holland, after 1954 the Islands became an autonomous territory with the exception of foreign affairs and defense. In 1986, Aruba gained a *status aparte* from the six Island federation but has remained within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The political system is based on that of local government in Holland with a democratic government (a cabinet), and a governor appointed as the Dutch Queen's representative. Aruba was settled around two thousand years ago by Caiquetio and Jirajara Arawaks and later by the Spanish, with a brief interregnum by the British. The Island was eventually seized and permanently settled by the Dutch. In the centuries that followed, a diversity of immigrants arrived as farmers, laborers, and merchants: Sephardic Jews from Brazil and Curacao, Venezuelans, Colombians, Madeiran Portuguese, various European peoples, and a small number of African slaves. Over time, these diverse settlers intermarried with the Indians creating a hybrid culture with many biological, cultural, and linguistic influences. The establishment of an American oil refinery in the 1920s precipitated a large influx of English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans. These were followed by peoples from the middle-east and Asia. After 1970, tourism became the primary source of revenue. The Island also receives a generous amount of Dutch development aid. Since the late 1980s, large numbers of migrants, mainly from Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, have permanently established themselves on the Island.

Education is based on the Dutch system, and literacy exceeds eighty-five percent. Ninety percent of the population is Catholic. The native language, Papiamentu, is the primary language of the majority of the Arubans, followed by English. Many Islanders also speak Spanish as well as Dutch (the official language) although the latter is rarely spoken. Most Arubans speak all four of these languages with some modest facility. Aruba can today be characterized as a plural society comprising a hybrid indigenous native culture, the *Arubano autentico*, and several distinct ethnic, but culturally heterogeneous groups among whom several languages are spoken.

### 1. Into the Field

## Into the field

I began fieldwork-proper in 1991 with the first explorations of the Island's carnival, and the different ways in which Arubans displayed themselves to the rest of the world through this festival.<sup>i</sup> As a primary tourist attraction, it is also an opportunity for Arubans to show the rest of the world who they are. During the first weeks, I talked to individuals from each of the different Island groups in the hopes of discovering which of their cultural practices and expressions in music, dance, costume, and language had contributed to the current form of the Aruban carnival. I explored every aspect of the carnival from preparation to performance, from jump-ups and street parades to competitive events. I looked at costume and theme, music and dance, and political and social satire manifested on floats and decorated carnival trailers. I collected data on photographs, slides, and film. I pored through historical documents, pamphlets, newspapers, and home movies. I collected and analyzed the texts of calypsos, and some tumbas, whose editorial-like narratives express local issues of importance to the Islanders.

The carnival season is a "time out of time" (Falassi 1987) which finds the Arubans at their most reflexive. While players spoke earnestly (carnival is a serious thing) about what to display of the Island's many groups and histories, they talked readily about the related issues of culture and identity. These early conversations provided me with an initial pathway into my research.<sup>ii</sup> Between 1991 and 1993 I participated in three carnivals,<sup>iii</sup> and pursued a semiotic examination of the costumed parades, music, and competitive events. Although this did not offer any radical new insights into the meaning of Caribbean carnival, the slippery nature of the answers to questions on the meaning of the social phenomena I was observing in parades and other events led me to realize that I was engaging a more complex community of ideologies than I had anticipated.

I continued to study every facet of the festival season and constructed a history on the origins and history of the Island's carnival (Razak 1997, 1998). During interviews with consultants, I found it difficult to keep our conversations within the frame of carnival. The subject seemed to evoke another level of interest and significance for native Islanders, in particular their relations with the Dutch and other Island groups and with Aruba's cultural future. Responding to this I re-focused my research towards the formation and expression of native identity and began to ask more specific questions. How does this hybrid native culture living on a small Island with so many immigrants and outside influences flowing through it manage to cohere as a discrete group? What is the nature of this identity, and how is it constituted and maintained?

These questions drew me into other spheres of festival performance, namely the music of the *dande* festival and the tumba festival, and into other spheres of social discourse including education, politics, and narratives of history and place. Discussions with my consultants on these subjects contributed significant insights into the research as a whole.

In chapters one through three -- "Introduction," "Approach and method," and "Theory in cultural identity" -- I present the methodological, theoretical, and philosophical approaches that have most influenced my research. In chapter four, "A brief history of Aruba," I provide a history of the Island through its four distinctive phases: pre-Columbian, colonialism, Americanization, and nationalism. In chapter five, "Natives, migrants and sojourners," I describe the various population groups on Aruba, and assign them into different categories according to their juridical status, time of arrival, and their national or ethnic origins. Chapter six, "Discourse on 'nativeness' in Aruba," is concerned with the identification of several discourses of nativeness that are found outside the sphere of festival performance. These include the native perception of Aruba's societal

structure. The question of who is, and who is not, a “real” Aruban. The concept and role of Indian heritage. The native language, Papiamentu, and its role in education. The deconstruction of the colonial Dutch education system. And finally, the concept of nativeness as it emerges from the juxtaposition of three major tropes, or, attitudes about the use and meaning of the physical landscape.

In chapter seven, “Performing identity through festivals,” I discuss the merits of seeking the meaning of culture through expressive cultural performances and survey relevant studies of carnival and their major findings. I also explore other carnivals in the Caribbean with special attention to the Trinidad carnival, which was introduced into Aruba in the 1940s. In chapter eight, “Carnival in Aruba,” I present a comprehensive history of the Aruba carnival, from its informal dual beginnings in the 1940s through its official inauguration in 1954, and then I outline the festival’s forty-year development. I also survey the principle institutions, seasonal events, masquerade categories, and major carnival characters. Observations are made on traditional elements of the Trinidad carnival that have persisted on Aruba and some reasons why are given.

In chapter nine, “Identity and meaning in Aruba’s music and song,” I survey the various musical genres extant on Aruba. I begin with the (relatively) native music of the tumba, the tambu, and the dande. The dande has not been studied or described in any formal way and this thesis presents its first exegesis. Aruban carnival music is also described: the calypso, asambeho (also described for the first time) steelband, and roadmarch. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the commentaries presented by the lyrics of calypso, and their meaning in the social, economic, and political contexts of Aruba. Chapter ten, “Contest, representation, and meaning in the carnival,” looks at the various references and representations in the carnival, including conflicts and tensions between participating groups, how representations of nativeness have Arubanized the carnival, how the “ideal” native female is presented through carnival queen elections, and the ways in which the festival presents a particular model of Aruban society to outsiders. In chapter eleven, “Crafting native cultural identity in Aruba,” I look at how the concept of “native” is represented in festival, music, and in various kinds of social discourse, and present some reasons why. I go on to propose a processual model of native Aruban cultural identity, and describe its structure, both its synchronic and diachronic formation, as well as some of the paradoxes therein.

In chapter twelve, “Reflections on a partial ethnography,” I present some thoughts on the meaning of the material I have presented in this thesis and their prospective contribution to existing theories of cultural identity. In addition, I propose a hypothesis for further research on the mechanisms through which cultural change takes place in all cultures. The final chapter, “Last word: native Aruban reflections on self,” includes conversations with two of my native Aruban consultants in the field. They had both read parts of my thesis and were asked to comment upon them. I also include four appendixes comprising a chronology of the Aruba carnival, a glossary of relevant Papiamentu and Spanish terms, newspaper articles that refer directly to my presence and work on Aruba, and my Curriculum Vitae.

Figure 2.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Approach and method

#### On knowledge and representation

As an anthropologist trained in the 1990s, I have attempted to take account of changing theoretical paradigms and pay attention to the problems inherent in gathering and interpreting information, the politics of representation, and the organization and presentation of the dissertation. In such a slippery intellectual landscape, David Howes suggests we adopt the new styles in anthropology -- dialogical, polyphonic, confessional, and share our authority with informants instead of monologuing (Howes 1990:66). Although monologue is still the dominant trope in this ethnography, I have attempted to produce a text that alludes to the collaborative nature of the research (Tyler 1986). The purpose of this section, then, is to discuss the approaches, influences, and methods used in the study.

Because I am working so close to the millennium, the century has settled like a frame around the thoughts of my subjects and myself. As the research drew to a close in 1996, our conversations on native identity became shaped by references to the approaching millennium and how little of the past there was to carry through. Although this thinking does cause the native Arubans to consciously maintain or recover essential elements of identity from the past, the concomitant effort to preserve and re-craft a coherent sense of self has more to do with the traumatic events of the fast-disappearing twentieth century.

#### With whom am I speaking?

Although I have talked with Arubans from all classes and ethnicities, this ethnography represents the views of only a few. Even though I engaged with a wide spectrum of people, the perspectives represented here are mainly from the middle- to upper-class educated elite. This is because they constitute the majority of carnivalistas. They are also the individuals who are defining the sociocultural standards and cultural emblems for others to follow (and reproduce) through their social prominence and economic and political power. In this sense, this thesis must be seen as a "partial ethnography" (Strathern 1991).

Rapid social and economic changes have variously impacted the Island's different population groups (Cole 1997). And although these different experiences of modernity are not explored in this research, some fundamental concerns are shared by all citizens of Aruba. For example, there is a uniform opposition to uncontrolled immigration, an ambivalence towards Dutch hegemony, and a strong resistance to Spanish-speaking immigrants on whom is blamed the decline of sexual morals and manners, and the proliferation of crime, drugs and alcoholism. This ethnography, however, reflects the views of those most able and willing to articulate them. Other Aruban realities and sensibilities related to the socio-economic impacts of change would need to be explored in order to present a more diverse, or representative, account.

#### Notes on interpretation

On the matter of the interpretation, Bob Scholte (1974) called upon anthropologists to assess the ethnological assumptions entailed in the constitution of our anthropological

knowledge. What we see, fail to see, or deliberately ignore all involve choices which result in our presenting a cluster of saliences which translate into a specific reading or a "re-presentation" of the field (Tedlock 1991:72-77). Thus, this section explores the influences and methods through which I have constructed the knowledge contained in this ethnography. Through such distancing, the self itself becomes an "object" to be understood (Fabian 1983). Looking back on roles played, journeys made, and people and places and events experienced, I perceive this object as a palimpsest, a layering of experiential patinas.

One layer of the palimpsest comprises a ten-year period spent in the far east, rich with the tastes and textures of another world. This sojourn out of time and place was unavoidably accompanied by a certain alienation. Now, spatially and temporally distanced, I can see that I became unrooted and dysfunctional, betwixt and between two worlds. In my ensuing role as visual artist, I learned to express the bounty of human diversity in visual terms, through chiaroscuro, texture, and form. My interest in, and approach to, expressive cultural performances and the crafting of this ethnography have both been filtered through the viewpoint of a visual artist. This proclivity propels me towards chimerical rather than prosaic forms, and draws me toward process rather than product -- the "how" rather than the "what."

As a cultural anthropologist in the field, I became aware of how much I had to unlearn to learn something new, to make space as it were. Each time I entered the field I changed a little, becoming something other than I once was (a less rooted, more fluid self). Erving Goffman (1959) noted that during the face-to-face work of field conversations we do seem like ephemeral beings, consciously constructing and reconstructing ourselves to better communicate with others. I suggest that this mechanism leaves a thin patina which we absorb over time. We also leave our residue on others, on our interpretations, and on our ethnography. These are the processes through which I read native culture, detecting a similar mechanism at work in the formation of their identity. Guided by this observation, I came to regard the fashioning of native identity as situated between historic praxis and pragmatic self-interest, a product of the ideational and experiential structures of the past and susceptible always to the transformative influences of the present.

The reflexive gaze of post-modern theory has given me insights into the often involuntary role of personal experience. It is clear from the foregoing observations that Fabian's "object" has heuristically informed my interpretations of the data contained in this thesis. I am guided by a palimpsest of half remembered cultural experiences that are filtered through readings that I gravitate towards. Thus, it is through the coming together of the engagement in the field and the role of experiential historic and contemporaneous patinas, that I have shaped the theory of processual identity presented in this dissertation.

### Crafting ethnography

The gathering of information and its subsequent appropriation for analytical purposes necessarily involves control and manipulation (Scholte 1974:433). A major technical problem faced when crafting an ethnography is in the representation of the multiple realities, divergent meanings, and experiences that we find in all communities (Keesing 1992:19). One way of dealing with this diversity is to write ethnographies as multilayered texts representing the different voices and points of view (Stoller 1986:68-69). I have used this approach in presenting different contexts of speaking, the location of speakers as outsiders or insiders, and the situatedness of actors. I employ a structure similar in some respects to one suggested by Dan Rose (1991). He suggested a layered approach

to discursive analysis that follows a narrative-digressive pattern: narrative + digression + narrative + digression. This method allows for story and analysis, text and context, evocation and interpretation to inhabit the same textual space (Rose 1991:109-123). An ethnography is not only a record of experience in the field (Howes 1990:57), it is also a continuing form of fieldwork. During the phase of its construction, changing perceptions, reflexive updating, and re-evaluation by emergent views provoke new readings and further nuancing of information. Dennis Tedlock argues that this "armchair dialoguing" continues to interpret recorded conversations long after we have left the field, "listening, puzzling, questioning, and, as it were, talking back" (Tedlock 1983:323).

The myriad of voices that individually and collectively contribute to our knowing tends to generate a messy bricolage. But, indeed this reflects the dynamic and multifarious nature of human societies. Through the editing process we begin to lose some of these voices; to paraphrase James Fernandez, we are "losing the thickness of the thicket" (Fernandez 1977:132). Even if I were to present each and every piece of data I gathered in the field, it would only ever be a partial representation of a place and a people (Clifford 1986, Strathern 1991). Despite these observations I have chosen to separate, edit, and situate the various voices and styles of discourse that were employed in the telling of Aruba for as Stuart Hall warns "when a discourse forgets that it is placed ... it tries to speak for everybody else" (Hall 1991:36).

The narratives in this ethnography comprise three kinds: analogue, dialogue, and interludes. Barbara Tedlock suggests that the farther we are from the field in terms of time, distance, and otherness, the greater the probability that our voice will become the dominant one in our ethnography while those of our subjects "will shrink into the background" (Tedlock 1991:81). I have found myself trapped in such a predicament. Furthermore, because I have elected to produce a process-oriented ethnography which necessarily employs a good deal of after voicing, it has tended to take on analogical rather than dialogical or polyvocal shape.<sup>iv</sup> The analogical aspects of discourse incorporate mainly secondary sources and my post-field voice engaged in distancing, hindsighting, and hermeneutic analysis. Here, contextual historic and sociopolitical information from secondary sources is presented to situate and interpret different voices. This is the why of social action, the one of many explanations for individual's assertions and behaviors.

I did not enter the field with any specific theoretical approach but have since reconsidered several insightful theoretical and methodological studies, related area studies, three dissertations, and other texts that explore various aspects of Aruban history, politics, society and economy. These outside voices identify the wider locations of cultural production and provide an intellectual foil for the analysis of my data, experiences, and interpretations.

The dialogical aspects of the thesis comprise face-to-face conversations between myself and the Islanders. These are the "sign-post" conversations that carry heuristic significance and have contributed to my understanding of the field.<sup>v</sup> However, no matter how I juxtapose or interweave the data I can only produce a limited construction of Aruban reality, even though the information lends itself to myriad interpretations and an infinite range of realities. This is the irony in ethnography. Through editing we end up producing *an* idea of a people, an epic performance of place. We are re-representing people as we collect their culture and give it "enduring value in a new arrangement" (Clifford 1988:231). To counter the onesidedness of this representation, I returned to the field with my preliminary interpretations and invited several friends to discuss them with me. In so doing, they added a deeper, more nuanced layer of Aruba's social world.

In the final segment of the ethnography I enter into a shared conversational space with some of my wisest native teachers. These discussions occurred in the last

phase of thesis when I returned to the Island to present my work to my native consultants in particular, and to Arubans in general. This was accomplished in four ways. The first was in the form of an interview with a local newspaper on the nature of my research and some of its preliminary findings (see Appendix III). The second was through a short television interview in which I was asked to discuss the focus of my research on Aruba. The third was through a presentation of my work to an Aruban town meeting organized by the Foundation for Investigation and Information (FUNDINI), an association of Aruban intellectuals. This meeting was advertised through the television news and an article in the popular *Aruba Today* daily newspaper (see Appendix III). The evening was well attended by individuals from all ethnic groups and socioeconomic classes. My presentation entitled, "Culture under construction: the future of Aruban identity," was followed by lively (sometimes heated) and insightful evening of debate with most of the audience participating.

The fourth and last way in which I presented my research was by asking specific Aruban individuals to read and comment on my work in face-to-face discussions. These were rich encounters, a talking to and a talking back which resulted in some changes to, or strengthening of, some of my assumptions. In chapter thirteen I present some of the astute and poetic reflections on the nature of native culture made by these consultants.

The narratives identified as "interludes" comprise excerpts from journal entries and poems. These provide a taste of the experiential dimensions of my fieldwork. They allude more to the feeling level of research in which I sensed and experienced (rather than thought or distanced) people and places. I offer observations from the margins of everyday life in the field, and reflect upon social encounters indirectly related to the research, but from which I construed or entered other domains of cultural life. I attempt also to convey the experience of entering the field at different stages of the research where each visit became "another entry, another viewpoint" (Dumont 1978:47) due to my increasing enculturation.

## **1. Tivoli lighting parade**

## CHAPTER THREE

### Theory in cultural identity

#### Introduction

Cultural communities that are caught up in an increasingly deterritorialized world, culture can no longer be understood entirely within a modernist framework. That is one based on structure, fixity, and boundedness. As people become increasingly connected to one another through wider access to media and travel, some become adept at crafting alternative representations of themselves in order to interact with different sociocultural spheres. In one sense, we are seeing the development of contingent virtual cultures (Adams 1996). In this environment, identity takes on a slippery quality making it increasing hard to discern the local experience and emic meaning of things (Appadurai 1991:191).

The expressive cultural performances that I explored in Aruba reveal a variously fixed and fluid native identity, sometimes fragmented and sometimes whole. Events that generated intensely meaningful and emotional experiences for players and watchers provided me with the best entrance into the substance and meaning of local identity. Roger Abrahams (1986) calls such performances "big experiences" in which people call attention to meaningful performances through their self-conscious stylization (Abrahams 1986). In looking for performances that evoke emotion for people in this way (Wikan 1991) I found that I was effectively sorting out the local from the non-local, and the culturally meaningful from the non-meaningful for native Islanders. This unraveling unearthed the evolving nature of an autochthonous sensibility situated precariously between the emotional-performative and pragmatic spheres of everyday life.

#### Caribbean identity

The basis of the Antillean experience, this shipwreck of fragments,  
these echoes, these shards of a huge tribal vocabulary,  
these partially remembered customs.  
[Derek Walcott 1992:9].

The Caribbean is among the most culturally and ethnically diverse regions of the world. It should not, according to Mintz (1971:19), be viewed as a distinct culture area. There is no single dominant religion or racial type and no generalized set of ethnic markers for the region as a whole. Each separate country and Island preserves unique socio-cultural and sub-cultural features that precludes its unqualified reference to a single overarching Caribbean culture (Allahar 1992:28). Dutch, English, French, and Spanish cultural links have persisted in the different territories influencing the development of local education, literature, languages and material culture. This has imparted the Islands of Aruba, Jamaica, Martinique and Puerto Rico, respectively, with a particular cultural flavor.

The contemporary Caribbean is involved in a general globalization process that links her more affluent populations in virtual space through television and cyberspace, profoundly influencing lifestyles and tastes, language behaviors, and values and aspirations (Friedman 1994, Appadurai 1990). People and places are becoming less "other" as they become increasingly familiar through real or virtual interactions. Political borders are less significant than they once were as we cross them with increasing ease. And for the diasporic communities scattered across the globe, the idea of homeland

defined by geographic boundaries is irrelevant if not obsolete (Premdas 1995:24). Small Island societies with tourism-based economies are particularly vulnerable to external cultural influences, and places like Dutch Aruba are likely to remain subject to cycles of transformation through their continuing interaction with external conditions and forces (Nash 1989, Smith 1989, Nunez 1989, Comaroff and Comaroff 1992).

### Culture in the post-modern world

Cultural identity is a nebulous concept even within the most impervious of social spaces. But, in the post-modern world diverse transformations of culture are forcing us to rethink or expand current definitions. Urged on by a disabling critique of anthropological theories and praxis, the concept of culture itself has moved beyond the static and structural towards the fluid and processual.<sup>vi</sup> Cultural identity is no longer a locally bounded matter (if it ever was) as the "close-to-home constantly mixes with the far-from-home" (Fox 1991:5). It is becoming harder to locate people in particular cultural communities as their lives engage and absorb images, ideas, and opportunities that come from elsewhere (Appadurai 1991:198-199). In the various roles we play throughout our lives it is likely that some dramatic features have been appropriated from elsewhere. As a consequence, the possibility for pragmatically fabricated virtual identities has complicated the interpretation of culture (Adams 1996). For native Arubans, comfortability with fragmentation and constant change is a natural state of being. The objectives of economic and moral survival provide a shared rationale for some patterned behaviors.

In trying to understand the nature of nativeness on Aruba, I became increasingly aware of the responsive and reflexive nature of my own cultural identity. The long periods of time I had spent out of my own cultural sphere in the past came into focus through hindsight, and the perspective of anthropology. I began to connect what the Arubans were saying about themselves and how they behaved in different contexts with some of my own past out-of-culture experiences. The results of partial cultural adaptation during a prolonged sojournment accords with an in-between state of being in which one becomes at once more and less than one was. This state is experienced by immigrants to a new cultural region, but not felt fully until returning to a former context. The Arubans have become astute at managing this state of in-betweenness to such an extent that it forms the basis of their character.

I hypothesize here that short term adaptation to new social spheres or longer term cultural change inevitably involves a partial unlearning of the self in order to learn the new. Those aspects that are discarded or become quiescent in social contexts are those that constrain the ability to interact successfully or adapt. Conversely, those parts that are retained include the essential characteristics of the self that are needed to manage the pragmatics of social interaction and which provide a continuum of wholeness. This process of cultural adaptation is managed with varying degrees of success in different social contexts by different individuals or peoples. Some native Arubans appear to have mastered these cultural acrobatics to a level of efficiency that has allowed their culture to survive some pivotal periods of demographic and economic change. Historic events and the nature of contemporary internal and external cultural, political, and economic encounters have all played important roles in the development of this identity. An examination of the specifics of these forces has made it possible to account for some aspects of its current formation.

The relationship between the stabilization of place and the crafting of self plays an important role in the construction cultural wholeness. For Arubans, having gone

through historic periods ranging from relative fixedness to unstable moments of rapid change, controlling place and crafting self have become symbiotically linked towards the attainment of social, moral and economic equilibrium. Anthony Cohen notes that, as experiencing actors pragmatically responding to externalities we are creators of culture rather than passive recipients of it (1993:195-197). This explains why we are able to function in an environment characterized by inconsistency, contradiction, and constant change. Moreover, suggests Catherine Ewing, (1990:263), we are able to project multiple, shifting and context-dependent representations of ourselves, each experienced as whole and continuous, with its own history and memories. It is this sense of coherence and wholeness that keeps the individual in equilibrium.

Engaging in a tripartite conversation with social scientists who are reading culture in similarly nuanced ways (Ewing 1990, Hall 1990, Cohen 1985, 1993, Goffman 1959), and with consultants and friends in the field, an idea of a processual native identity materialized. Although this identity is fluid and changing, there are moments of fixity within the flow. These pauses in cultural process are made visible in focused social interaction, discourses, and in expressive cultural performances such as festival and music. The plurality of this identity derives from specific historical experiences and geographic and cultural spaces. Increasingly well traveled, the native Arubans engage the international social sphere on a regular basis. These interactions, in turn, change local formations of culture as they are absorbed into the think and feel of the native paradigm. According to Stuart Hall (1991) as culture is reconfigured in this way, counter-identities are produced that slow or control its direction returning to the local and to the familiar. This response exists also in Aruba. For natives, a return to the self is, in part, a return to the past. The development of an autochthonous identity based on a corpus of codes imbued with ideas of nativeness provides, for many, a cognitive space of resistance. When deployed as a heuristic device, it aims to slow down the rate of cultural change in the population and control the evolutionary path of native culture. It is a counter-identity that is inaccessible to dominating outsiders. Out of synch with the cultural present and with the worlds beyond, those outside of its cognitive domain have no language, no relevant rules to assess its performance, or any relevant cultural basis to talk directly to it or undermine it. It is an identity which occupies its own semantic space. It is the core of self from which Arubans derive their sense of self, and self-esteem, and their power to confront outsiders.

A second dimension of this paradigm among natives is the ability to form ephemeral masks that protect the core and manage relations with outsiders. This involves the production of different self-representations, aggregates of biological and cultural features drawn from an historically layered identity. I am not trying to suggest a particular face for a discrete native identity. Indeed, few anthropologists today would assert an encompassing cultural identity for any complex community, rather, this study attempts to understand the process whereby cultural identity is formed and deployed in real time and over time by native Arubans.

### **On the beach**

## CHAPTER FOUR

### A Brief History of Aruba

A Yupik Eskimo speaks:

Before the white man came, we used to build our  
houses underground and bury our dead above the ground.  
After he came, we built our houses above ground  
and buried our dead below. We haven't been warm since.  
[Phyllis Morrow 1992:58].

Aruba lies eighteen miles off the northern coast of Venezuela.<sup>vii</sup> The Island is small at nineteen-and-one-half miles long by six miles wide, and relatively flat with the highest hill a mere 620 feet above sea level. The mean temperature is around 87 F. and rainfall is rather infrequent. The arid climate sustains a semi-desert landscape similar to that of northern Arizona. The first Spanish writers called the Island Orua and Oruba, the latter being a contraction of oro hubo meaning "there was gold." However, no gold was found until 1824. It is also theorized that Oruba was derived from the Carib word oraoubao (ora: snail or shell, oubao: Island) meaning "Island of snails or shells." The word might also relate to the Bay of Oruba on Lake Maracaibo (Hoyer 1945:5). According to Johan Hartog (1961:32) the name Oruba (var. sp. Ouruba, Arouba) is of Indian origin and was modified, by 1526, to its modern spelling. Aruba resembles also the name of a shrub which is called in French Guyana: arube (Gatschet 1885:300).

The most definitive text of Aruban history has been written by the Dutch historian Johan Hartog (1961) and provides the basis for this chapter as far as the 1970s. Events and conditions after that date have been derived from more recent and varied sources, and from my own fieldwork. However, these offer only an incomplete account of current conditions since materials have been selected for their relevancy to issues of culture and identity. For reasons which will become apparent in a later discussion on education and the colonial condition (chapter six), a comprehensive history in native terms and language has yet to be written. From recent conversations in the field, however, I believe that some native scholars will soon begin to write their own history.

An interesting practice among Arubans across all groups is the self-publishing of autobiographies and poems.<sup>viii</sup> This custom appears to have existed for some time and is perhaps increasing with the achievement of greater local autonomy within the Dutch Antilles. Together, these will undoubtedly provide another location of meaning from which may be drawn a diversity of local realities and experiences. This chapter is not an attempt to rewrite Aruban history, and is far from complete. But it does include a number of events and temporal contexts that are needed for the proper presentation of the material in this ethnography. The history of Aruba can be divided roughly into four phases: pre-Columbian, colonization, Americanization, and nationalism.

#### Pre-Columbian Aruba

From archaeological excavations, it appears that the Island has been inhabited for at least 2,000 years (Du Ry 1960:88-94). Most probably by several different groups of Indians at different times. These include the Ciboney who were coastal fishermen who used sling-shots, stone balls and practiced cave burials, and rock-painting. They were

followed by the Caiquetio and Jirajara Arawaks who were farmers, traders, and skilled navigators.<sup>ix</sup> During the pre-Colombian period the Indians practiced a subsistence economy based on fishing and horticulture. They are believed to have maintained frequent contact with the (now named) Venezuelan and Colombian mainland. Several scholars view Aruba as essentially an extension of Venezuela because of its historic cultural affinities (Green 1974, Hartog 1961, Loukotka 1968, Kidder 1948, Hoyer 1945). From comparative archaeological evidence Alfred Kidder notes a general cultural relationship with Indians that resided on the Paraguana Peninsular and in the Venezuelan states of Lara and Falcon.<sup>x</sup>

**Figure 3.**

Julian Steward has described the tribes from which Aruba's population was originally derived. The Jirajara appointed war chiefs and the Caiquetio a tribal chief or *cacique* who was accredited with supernatural ability to control natural phenomena. They made offerings to the sun and moon, practiced divination with tobacco ash, and communed with spirits while using narcotic herbs. Shamans not only served as priests but also cured illness by sucking out disease-causing objects. Agriculture was well developed with irrigation, and salt was manufactured and traded. Steward notes several items of material culture common to these tribes, including pile dwellings, clubs, bows and arrows, fish drugs, hammocks, women's front aprons, calabash penis covers, body painting, chief's feather, gold and pearl ornaments, dugout canoes, woven bags, garments and hammocks, and a maguey drink (Steward 1948:21-22).

### Colonial period

When the Spanish first alighted on the Island, in 1499, they perceived a parched and barren place they disparagingly characterized an *isla inutíle* -- a useless place. Although no large-scale plantations were ever established because of the climate, Aruba (along with Curacao and Bonaire) provided Spain with an excellent regional defensive flank and a place to raise animals for food and hides. The Indians were coerced into labor and many were taken to the mines of Santo Domingo. As Aruba developed into "one big rancho" (Hartog 1961), the fragile environment came under siege. Brazilwood trees were felled for buildings and fuel, and imported cattle, donkeys, goats and sheep ravaged the vegetation.

Around this period, the Dutch West India Company was seeking a port in the Caribbean from they might "perennially infest the West Indies" (Goslinga 1971:265). They first landed on Aruba around 1636, where they expelled some 73 inhabitants, mainly Spaniards and their Indian slaves (Van Heekeren 1960:103). Unlike the Spanish, the Dutch interest in the region was focused on monetary gain rather than moral domination, "profit was the goal" (Goslinga 1971:260). Because Aruba produced little of any importance<sup>xi</sup> there was never more than a minimal Dutch presence on the Island.<sup>xii</sup> A peaceful period of light occupation ensued and small groups of Indians from the opposite coast slowly returned to the Island to work as horsemen for the Dutch residents (Hartog 1961).

The Dutch West India Company did not allow any general settlement until 1754 when a Sephardic Jew from Curacao, Moses Maduro, was granted permission to establish residence. Curacao had hosted a large settlement of Sephardics since 1659 after their expulsion from Portuguese Brazil. They used Portuguese as a written language, which accounts for its presence in Aruba's lingua franca.<sup>xiii</sup> Papiamentu is a melodic mélange of Caiquetio,<sup>xiv</sup> Spanish, Dutch, African,<sup>xv</sup> Portuguese and English words. The neglect the Island experienced under both the Spanish and the Dutch (and a brief ten year interregnum [1805-1815] under the British) inclined Aruba's small Indian populations towards the mainland. There were frequent marriages between the two populations, and increasing commercial interests. It is for these reason that there is "a decided Spanish strain in Aruba's language and folk customs."<sup>xvi</sup> After 1780, more Dutch, Sephardics, and some English settlers arrived, often by way of Curacao or Bonaire, and together with the existing inhabitants, they became Dutch West India Company leaseholders or concessionaires, but with no property rights (Green 1974:14). Some later settlers brought African slaves with them to work as house servants and on small plantations. It was during this early period of Dutch settlement that the bases of

Aruba's first families were established.

The foundations of the future capital, Oranjestad, were laid in 1797. At that time dwellings consisted of pre-constructed cane walls with roofs of plaited maize stalks or palm-leaves, coated with mud. The first few masonry houses of the period were mostly one storied, and white-washed with red-tiled roofs. The earliest population figures for the Island (1806 ) indicate that of the 1,546 inhabitants (whites, Indians, and mixed), 194 persons were of African descent. These immigrant farmers, laborers and merchants intermarried with the Indian population. In 1848, the first steamer, the *Venezuela*, sailed into Aruba's harbor, making the occasion memorable by running aground at once. During this time, hardly anything was imported from Europe or America directly, almost everything came via Curacao (some 50 miles away). By 1863, the growing population stood at 3,154 which included 758 newly manumitted African slaves. Many modern-day Arubans deny any African blood and there is no evidence for any large migration of slaves. Moreover, phenotype studies (Rife 1972) show that unions between this group and the native population did take place.

During this period also, the last of the concessions given out by the Dutch West India Company expired and the Island came under the direct administration of the Dutch government.<sup>xvii</sup> The landscape was dotted with *cunucus*, or farmsteads and simple homes built from mud and cactus stems. Transport was by donkey for the few that could afford it. Families fished and kept small kitchen gardens protected from animals by low stone walls and cactus fences.<sup>xviii</sup> Arubans gathered wood for cooking and caught the scarce rainwater in barrels or dugout earthen *tankis* or reservoirs. A few wells were sunk and the water filtered through limestone to make it potable. Economic activity was erratic. Goats and sheep were kept, but they were left to forage for themselves. Cattle farming, some agriculture (maize being the staple), gathering of cochineal and tannin, straw hat plaiting and fishing all helped to sustain the people at one time or another over the centuries. Nevertheless, they still suffered from periods of famine and near-starvation. Aloe grew well in the arid conditions, and small, but ubiquitous aloe plantations sprung up all over the Island, until the rise of synthetic products made their processing too expensive. Some deposits of phosphate and gold were discovered which provided income for a few people (but mainly for the colonial treasury) until the beginning of this twentieth century.<sup>xix</sup>

Although the mines employed advanced technology, they were small-scale and short-lived as they became depleted or too expensive to harvest. In any case, the mines provided only a few families with a comfortable lifestyle. Poverty eventually forced many men into wage labor on the plantations of Venezuela, Colombia, and Cuba. This caused the *cunucus* to be neglected and less productive. Rainfall became even more sparse, and water and food sometimes had to be shipped to the Island from Curacao or Holland. With little industry, subsistence farming, and an arid climate, the Arubans were economically vulnerable and increasingly dependent on the outside world (Hartog 1961).

In 1862 the population stood at 3,258, into which the last of the pure-blood Indians were absorbed. In 1869, restricted suffrage was introduced but the largely rural population had little interest in politics until after 1930. By 1900 the population had increased to 9,702. The donkey remained the most common mode of transport long after the first car arrived in 1915. The first library was established in 1905; the first typewriter in 1906; the first wireless in 1911, and the first silent movie was shown in 1919. Linkages with the outside world did not increase markedly until the 1920s. Early travel was by boat, made dangerous by strong currents and heady trade winds. Contact with Curacao, the seat of Government for the Netherlands Antilles, was slight for this reason. More accessible and common was contact with Venezuela, just a few miles away.

In 1924 limited electric supply was provided and the first seaplane taxied into

Horses Bay, in Oranjestad, in July of 1925. There were two small towns, coastal Oranjestad (now the capital), and the rural settlement of Santa Cruz, as well as some small villages including San Nicolas, Noord and Rancho. This was the situation when the Lago Oil and Transport Company established a large oil refinery in 1928 on the southern tip of the Island near San Nicolas.<sup>xx</sup> This heralded a new era of prosperity and an end to hardship for the Arubans. This was also the beginning of the Americanization of Aruba.

### Americanization of Aruba

The new oil industry unleashed a force unparalleled in the Island's history which radically affected its ecology, demography and culture over a remarkably short period of time. In 1929 Aruba received her first hard-surfaced road, a water distillation plant was built in 1932, and in 1935, the first airport saw the start of increased connections with other Islands and the mainland. A road joining Oranjestad and San Nicolas was completed in 1938, and by 1943, the first hotel, the eight-bedroom Strand, was opened in Oranjestad. By 1944, radio-telephone service opened Aruba to influences from around the world. During the Second World War, Aruba became strategically important, and Dutch, British, Scots, and American troops were bivouacked on the Island. Lago (as the refinery was popularly named), rapidly expanded production to cope with the demands of the allied war effort, and was forced to increase its labor force drastically. By 1949 Aruba was air-linked to Curacao, Maracaibo, Kingston, Havana, Miami, Port au Prince, St Maarten, St Kitts, Costa Rica, Panama and Trinidad. In 1951, the population of Aruba had grown to some 53,000 people, comprising over 48 different nationalities (Hartog 1961).

The Lago refinery had a great impact on the composition of Aruba's population.<sup>xxi</sup> An initial lack of industrial skills among native Arubans and the desire to hire an English speaking workers led the company to recruit thousands of foreign laborers -- mainly from the British Caribbean Islands. As the labor force grew, San Nicolas developed into a shanty-town, typical of boom or frontier towns (Green 1974:24). Between 1938 and 1945, the service demands of the refinery attracted Chinese, Levantines, East Indians, Surinamese, and Ashkenazim Jews from Eastern Europe. In less than 30 years the Island population grew from 9,000 to 55,000 giving the Island a remarkably high population density of 286 persons to one kilometer (Hartog 1961:369). The new industry brought immediate tangible material and economic benefits to the Island.<sup>xxii</sup> It provided the native population relief from their dependency on a drought-prone subsistence horticulture, and the necessary seasonal migration of family members to plantations overseas. Initially, many Aruban workers experienced difficulty in assimilating into a modern industrial economy. Handicapped by a lack of English, poor time-keeping skills, and work habits geared to the needs of horticulture, many native Arubans were initially unable to participate in the ensuing economic boom. But within a few years, and with improvements in the general level of education, many natives moved into the new industry and its supporting service sectors. This had the effect of pushing the traditional agricultural economy to the periphery, and coercing the population into a dependent economic culture (Kalm 1974).

A good deal of antagonism was built up against outsiders during this period. The impact of oil signaled the end of the dominant role of the few native Aruban merchants in the economy, and displaced the dominant cultural influence of Venezuela and the Spanish language, for that of the United States and the English language.<sup>xxiii</sup> The refinery also introduced a new kind of damage to the environment. Large tracts of land were

cleared, the harbor was dredged, and the last of the ground water was depleted for refining. Huge mountains of waste tars from the refining process were dumped for miles along the beautiful beaches of the wild south coast, and toxic fumes settled over San Nicolas. For over half of the twentieth century, Aruba's economy was almost entirely dependent on the oil industry with a secondary, but significant, growing reliance on tourism.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### Nationalism

Although the roots of nationalism reach back to the 1940s, arising from the relative prosperity of the Island during World War II, Aruba did not gain the autonomy she sought for many decades. In 1986, however, Holland finally allowed Aruba to withdraw from the six Island federation of the Netherlands Antilles and establish a separate status, a *Status Aparte* (outlined in Oostindie 1995). This was a nervous time for Aruba. The oil refinery had closed in 1985 and the Island was economically and emotionally devastated (Croes and Alam 1990:82). Aruba's economic survival was now solely dependent on a rapid and successful expansion of tourism which was well established by the mid-1970s. Although no Arubans wanted to be overrun with more outsiders, they had few other choices. The bravery and independence of the natives became apparent when many of them liquidated commercial assets overseas and aggressively sought international investment.<sup>xxv</sup> Moreover, several risky local projects were underwritten by the Aruban government.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Once again, the ecological environment was to shape the Island's destiny. Low rainfall, cooling tradewinds, sandy beaches, the lack of earthquakes and typhoons, and for north-Americans especially, the added bonus of internal political stability, and the attachment to Holland -- suddenly became the Island's biggest asset. Aruba did not have the required level of natural beauty and diversity of geography for ecological tourism. Neither did the natives with their hybrid culture offer a resource for cultural tourism, so they opted for recreational tourism. Sand, sea, fun and gambling were promoted by beautiful color pictures of golden beaches and sails in the sunset and, contrary to local mores, postcards of topless bathing beauties. The symbols of sun, sea, and friendly natives were commodified.

As efforts to expand the tourism sector got underway, the natural environment again came under siege. The Island was re-zoned to accommodate a new way of life. Land was appropriated for high-rise hotels, up-market condos, time-share apartments, and supermarkets. Taco-Bell and Pizza Hut arrived on cue, as did a bowling alley, several casinos, a new entertainment center, and a rash of sports facilities. A large tract of nature reserve was appropriated by a local consortium of business people to build a privately owned eighteen-hole golf course at the request of the Hyatt Hotel, who said to the government "if you build it, we will come." Once again the natural environment came under attack and wild life was pushed further to the periphery of their habitats. A significant proportion of the landscape was converted for outsider space, privately bounded and inaccessible to locals who could not afford to pay the admission price.

Although these new upheavals brought rapid technological, infrastructural, social, and cultural change with both negative and positive effects, the majority of Arubans benefitted materially, even if only in some modest way. There was some revitalization of the few native crafts, dances, and music, which has brought about a new and positive reevaluation of nativeness. On the other hand, there is tension between environmentalism and traditionalism (although these are complementary tropes), and modernity which are played out in everyday life, in politics, between urban development

and historic preservation, between different generations embodying different values and desires, and between local and global orientations.

Although education has enabled many native Arubans to adapt relatively successfully to the modern economy, there continues to be considerable social problems.<sup>xxvii</sup> The rural population suffers high levels of alcoholism, as did workers undergoing similar rural to urban transitions during the industrial revolutions in Europe (Janssen 1970). They have also remained in low paying, low status jobs. Because over one half million foreigners visit Aruba every year (mainly from North America, Venezuela, and increasingly from Europe) a tourism-led development, catering to outside styles, tastes, and values has contributed to the erosion of traditional values, and increasing drug and alcohol problems, and criminal behavior.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Caribbean tourism, and the images conjured up by advertising campaigns to sell it, have forced Aruba to create a kind of generic, fantasy Island. While Aruba had little natural beauty in terms of this fantasy -- no forests, mountains, exotic flowers or waterfalls, and few palm trees -- it did, however, have three major ingredients important for Caribbean tourism: beautiful beaches, sun and blue skies, and no rain clouds to impede that all-important tan. Much of what was lacking in terms infrastructure and natural beauty could be constructed, and it was, most successfully. Palms were planted all along the coastline, hotel gardens and rural restaurants became tropical paradises as expensive grass, shrubs and trees were imported from Miami, Colombia, and other places, along with exotic birds from the rain forests of South America, and two camels. The camels have adapted rather well to the familiar feel of sand beneath their feet. In short, Aruba has become more than it was in natural terms, a culturally constructed place, its new aesthetic shape exploitable as an economic resource.

Similarly, the capital has been refaced with appropriated cultural forms. In the 1981 Aruba Tourism Development Plan the Island was defined as a tourism product -- a Caribbean destination where the visitor can find a "warm, steady climate, lovely beaches and everything else typically expected from a tropical vacation." It was sophisticated and modern, with a "Dutch ambiance, and Antillean friendliness" and an honest people with "deep respect for peace and safety" (Spinrad 1981:11-2). Peace, safety, friendliness, and sun, sea and sand, are indeed the products that Aruba was selling, but tourists complained that they could find little that was really Aruban in the material culture of the Island. Response came in the deployment of Aruban material symbols, many of which were purchased elsewhere (Columbia, Mexico, Venezuela, Miami, Haiti) and re-labeled "Aruban."

Conservation or reconstruction of urban spaces defines or redefines, the forms of tradition and history. The question of whose history is to be celebrated in the physical facts of such action determines the forms they take (Herzfeld 1991:250). A town of featureless 1950s architecture, Oranjestad lacked "dramatic urban form" (Spinrad 1981:11-5) and had few remaining remnants of the past.<sup>xxix</sup> A decision was made by the owners of these commercial properties to appropriate the architectural style of Dutch Curacao which boasted a dearth of fine colonial architecture resonating with a "noble past." Oranjestad was speedily refaced with Curacaon-style facades, and palatial gold-domed, and stone balustraded buildings, surrounded with tree-covered cooling plazas that never were, because, surmises David Lowenthal, "the remade past is more monolithically interpreted" (Lowenthal 1985:41). The resulting effect is a negotiated sense of place that lies between tourist expectations of historic place and a borrowed history. Some of the few remaining older buildings were rescued from a century of destruction and neglect, and office buildings and store fronts were refaced with a carefully cultivated image of a glorified Spanish and Dutch past, which in reality, had left rather little of itself in the forms and practices of Island life.

For decades, the Island had been habitually covered with the flotsam and jetsam of the material age, tossed with disregard among the cacti and boulders, preserved for eternity by the desiccating sun. Plastic bags, flattened Pepsi cans, broken beer bottles, and food cartons lay strewn around. Building waste, rusting cars and refrigerators, were scattered amongst the prickly undergrowth. As a result of mounting complaints from visitors, the tour operators threatened to cease recommending Aruba as a vacation destination, unless the Island was cleaned up quickly. Business and government responded with concern, and an environmental education campaign was mounted. But the response was slow. The rural natives had always to struggle with the land for their own survival, rather than the survival of the land - to exploit rather than aestheticize. As a result, the government continues to struggle with bottle throwers and waste dumpers, and most likely will for a few more generations.

The second incentive for protecting and preserving the environment has been influenced by Holland. Native Arubans educated in Holland in the 1970s now have risen to positions of power in government. In recent years the original vegetation of Aruba has suffered heavily from over-cutting and overgrazing. In dry years, the goats consume almost any plant or young tree, even the species they normally shun. This is the main reason that attempts at reforestation have not been successful. Moreover, Arubans refuse to pen their goats, despite government efforts to persuade goat owners to exchange them for cattle, which are more economically viable, and more easily fenced in. But on Aruba the saying goes that "every goat is a vote" and no politician would dare to introduce legislation prescribing the penning of grazing animals (Rooze 1982:44). This would force livestock owners to buy costly animal feed. So the problem of overgrazing by the sheep and goats, which today equal almost one third of the human population, is unlikely to be solved any time soon.

Signs of erosion are everywhere, and with each rain more valuable topsoil is lost to the ocean. Attempts are made to reduce runoff by constructing earthen reservoirs around the Island, but most of the annual rainfall is concentrated in a few short showers, or an occasional heavy downpour, during the months of October through January. Rain is scant throughout the remainder of the year. Hence, as Vera Rooze noted "after the long dry season, rain is a welcome event in Aruba, a signal for nature to burst out in fresh greenery and blooms. Even the cacti look happy, swelling up like accordions to store the precious water in their stems" (Rooze 1982:44). Through Dutch encouragement and development funds, natural parks and wild-life sanctuaries have been established in the hope of slowing the loss of animal and plant diversity. Today, visiting Dutch scientists are studying problems such as coastal erosion, waste disposal and recycling, and toxic spill management. An agricultural station grows drought and salt resistant trees and shrubs for local planting and sells them for two or three dollars to encourage the re-greening of the Island, in part to attempt to replenish the soil lost so long ago.

## **1. Carnival queen elections**

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Natives, migrants and sojourners

In order to describe the population of Aruba today I have assigned people into different categories, derived in part from their time of arrival on Aruba, national origins, and somatic characteristics (see Figure 4). These are the “native Arubans,” “Emigre Arubans,” “Afro-Arubans,” and “Migrants.”

#### Native Arubans

The primary group of Islanders in terms of status are the natives who make up approximately 65 percent of the population. I sub-divide these into three groups based on a complex of characteristics of race and class: elite urban, urban, and rural. The elite group is descended from the original founding families of the Dutch and Iberian settlers, Sephardic Jews and other West-European migrants who arrived in Aruba in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is interesting to note that the pattern of endogamous marriage has been retained in this group since their formation in the seventeenth century. Their forbears were the Sephardim of Curacao. After having been expelled from Brazil, many Sephardics "remembering the comparative freedom they had enjoyed under the Dutch rule in north-eastern Brazil departed for Holland or her colonies, arriving in Curacao between 1651 and 1654" (Karner 1969:9). Here they became extremely useful mercantile agents for the Dutch West India Company. They knew the area and spoke either Spanish, or a Spanish-based Creole. Except for economic activities, the two European-based population segments existed and remained socially and culturally separate. The Creole language, Papiamentu, developed as much as a means of communication between the Dutch and the Sephardics, as well as between these segments and the African slaves. Both the Sephardics and Dutch retained their own native tongues for communication within their own ethnic group. The Sephardics became prosperous and their societal position in society was high.

Figure 4.

Determined to retain their cultural identity and pattern of descent, endogamous marriage was favored and commonly practiced. Because there was a limited number of accepted families from which spouses could be chosen, marriage could be of two types: cross as well as parallel cousin marriage with one family, and, marriage between members of these extended families. The former consolidated the family position, and at the same time safeguarded its material possessions from dispersal. The latter solidified the whole group. It is not surprising, then, that during this period from the later seventeenth through the nineteenth century, extremely few new family names appear, while the original surnames keep recurring over and over again (Karner 1969:11-12).

The number of Sephardics on Curacao between 1,745 and 1,894 fluctuated from 783 to 2,000 persons, reflecting the economic ups and downs of the Island. During periods of out-migration the Sephardim moved to other Islands (Karner 1969:29). Seeking a commercial base of their own and relative independence from the Dutch,

several Sephardics succeeded in obtaining permission from the Dutch West India Company to establish an agricultural settlement on Aruba. These new migrants established their own agro-mercantile and formed an Aruban elite (Phalen 1977:216-218). The newly resident Sephardics converted to Catholicism through marriage with Latin Americans reflecting an interest in establishing and securing commercial relations. Another reason may have been to mark themselves off from the Curacao Sephardics who retained the Jewish faith, and from the Protestant Dutch on Aruba. The Catholicism of the Aruban mestizo Indian population may have also been an influence.

The eventual sharing of language, religion, sociocultural ties and an appreciation of relative isolation from Curacao and its Dutch control and focus, all served to consolidate these groups into a native Aruban population with a still relatively endogamous Sephardic descendant elite and mestizo Indian descendant base (Phalen 1977:218-220). While urban natives as a whole occupy the median of somatic characteristics, some natives exhibit higher levels of Indian or African biological traits (Rife 1972). Informants descriptions of the ideal Aruban specify "light to white skin, sparse freckles, hazel eyes and Auburn hair" (Kalm 1974:79). However, most individuals are brown skinned, with dark hair and eyes, resulting from intermarriage between later non-Sephardic nineteenth century immigrants and the "predominantly Indian, black, and mulatto offspring of the first settlers" (Kalm 1974:78). The white category is reserved for the self-definition of Sephardic descended elite Arubans. <sup>xxx</sup>

In the population as a whole, many different phenotypes occur: Mestizo, Caucasoid, Negroid, Mulatto, Amerindian, East Indian, and Chinese, thus because somatic characteristics cannot serve as an accurate indicator of ethnicity, surnames have become an important ethnic indicator (Green 1975:90). Most generally, however, rural natives constitute the lower socio-economic class of relatively unskilled workers. The urban population comprise skilled working, middle socio-economic middle-class. And, the elite urban and middle to upper socio-economic class comprise a few extended families (the so-called "top ten" founding families of Aruba). The latter tend to hold the dominant status positions in government, banking and commerce and are, regardless of economic status, the social and political elite of Aruba (Kalm 1974:80). This group have also remained relatively endogamous, linguistically separate, and socially and culturally segregated from the Afro-Arubans who are considered "black" in native terms. In the 1970s, with increasing nationalism there was a concomitant hostility toward those groups that settled in Aruba since the third decade of the twentieth century. The native-born offspring of the new immigrants despite their Dutch citizenship status, were still considered outsiders (Kalm 1974:13).

Florence Kalm states that her informants make clear distinctions between the categories of Arubans. That "Arubano" refers to descendants of the top ten founding families. That "Arubano" denotes the descendants of native-born parents whose ancestors came to Aruba during the nineteenth century from South America and Europe. And that the term, "di Aruba," refers to the native-born offspring of twentieth century immigrants. Although I generally concur with Kalm's distinction between the segments relative to the question of who is an Aruban in native eyes, I have found no evidence to support the association of the terms Arubano, Arubano, and di Aruba with different segments of the native population. As with much Papiamentu terminology, (which lacks a definitive spelling system), such lexical variations reflect the flexible use of terms and spelling. For example, Aruban is spelt in many ways: "Arubano" is an old Papiamentu spelling; "Arubena" is a Spanish spelling; and "Arubano," "Arubaan" and "Arubaanse" are Dutch. Changes in spelling occurred over time and under the influence of the Dutch or Spanish presence. All native Arubans may be referred to with any of the above terms. Any distinctions among this group are made on the basis of family name,

language spoken in the home, and socio-economic class. Somatic characteristics are considered only in specific situations associated with social propinquity. Today, with the breakdown of the relationship between kin groups and barrios, distinctions between people have become much more ambiguous, subtle, and contextualized. The terms Aruban and Aruban, however, refer to native and non-native alike, so long as they are juridically Aruban.

### Emigre Arubans

The Emigres are juridically Aruban, and comprise immigrants of diverse nationalities, but primarily the Dutch, Surinamers, East Indian, Lebanese, East European Ashkenazim Jews, and Chinese. Apart from the Dutch colonizers, the latter groups came to Aruba in the twentieth century. Dutch nationals come to Aruba mainly on short tours of duty. Quite a few run businesses and some have settled permanently. They typically hold civil service positions, are teachers, clergy, doctors, nurses, and customs officers, or work in government and banking. They are locally referred to as *macambas*, or Dutch people. They tend to keep to their own social circles and do not mix much with the locals, in part because of their short residency periods, and in part because of cultural elitism.

In the early days of the refinery "news of the boom-town rapidly reached the scattered emigres because recruiting agents for the company traveled throughout the Caribbean and Northern South America" (Kalm 1974:100). These migrants came to work initially in the refinery, or were attracted by the rising prosperity of the Island. They settled permanently on the Island in the first half of the twentieth century, and with their strong entrepreneurial skills helped to develop the economy. They were particularly successful in the retail, hotel, banking, and insurance sectors. Educated Surinamers, with the advantage of speaking the Dutch language (the language of government and law), advanced rapidly through the ranks of the civil service. Their children succeeded academically, and won scholarships for higher education in Holland sooner than the native Arubans. As a result, they are found today in all types and levels of social organization and in high level administrative jobs (Green 1974:48-49).

In the late 1920s Creole Chinese from Suriname, and other Caribbean Islands, came to work as cooks for Lago. Later they opened cafeteria-saloons, rum shops and groceries, or else worked in Lago as time-keepers and machine shop operators (Kalm 1974:135). Some early marriages took place between Chinese men and Aruban women, but later it became the custom to send to Hong Kong for brides. The Creole Chinese intermarried with the general population of their home Islands and with other West Indians (Green 1974:56). Later, as these sojourners became permanently settled, they sent for their relatives to join them. When the refinery was automated during the 1950s, some left the Island permanently. But many settled, opening restaurants and supermarkets. In recent years, two large Spanish-speaking communities of Chinese from Venezuela and the Dominican Republic have settled also on the Island, and are moving into the same economic niche as the Chinese-Aruban population.

Levantines (Syrians and Lebanese), and Ashkenazim (Eastern European Jews), although numerically small, have had an important economic impact in Aruba. The Ashkenazim, plagued by persecution and the economic depression in Europe (Kalm 1974:101), together with the Levantines, came as migrants to the New World in search of a more prosperous and secure future.<sup>xxxi</sup> Together, the Chinese, East Indians, Ashkenazim and Levantines are active in commerce, manufacturing, construction, and retailing. Most started from a relatively humble base, but because they were of light skin color, they were accepted readily into an Aruban society that "felt overwhelmed by the

black inundation." This spared them the "hostile reception generally experienced by emigrating Jews" (Kalm 1974:101). The relative prosperity of the Island created a high demand for the ready-made goods of Ashkenazim, who became wealthy and important to the economy despite their low numbers (Green 1974:58). Eventually, the superior skills and international contacts of these immigrants enabled them to become the dominant commercial force on the Island, usurping the old Aruban elite, who nevertheless remained the social and political aristocracy (Cole 1992:127).

There are also many people of Portuguese descent on the Island, mainly from other Caribbean Islands, and from Madeira. But they are not distinguished as a distinct group since they have successfully assimilated into the native population. They came to work either in the refinery, or in the jobs that the native Arubans resisted such as gardening and street cleaning. Some now run small *refresquerias*, or cafes, and run garden centers and landscape businesses that cater to the hotels and government (Green 1974:57).

### Afro-Arubans

I subdivide the Afro-Arubans into three categories. The English, who are the English-speaking peoples from the British Windward Islands and the Dutch Islands of Saba and St Eustatius. The Antilleans, who are Dutch speaking Afro-Antillians from St Maarten, Bonaire, and Curacao, and from Suriname. The Dutch speaking Afro-Arubans are seen by native Arubans as sharing more of their own culture and historical experience under the Spanish and Dutch. And thirdly, other Afro-Caribbeans from non-English Caribbean territories, for example, St. Martin, Guadeloupe, Martinique and the Dominican Republic. These individuals are placed into the same category as the English by the native Arubans.

The Lago refinery recruited English-speaking workers mainly from Trinidad, Jamaica, and from British Guyana, with smaller numbers from Barbados, Antigua, St Kitts, St Vincent, and Grenada. Many had acquired industrial work skills through British or American corporations, on the Panama canal, and in the modernizing sugar refining industries. Although this group was eventually largely excluded from the better paid jobs in the Aruba refinery, many were ambitious and took advantage of the vocational and US college-bound programs initiated by the refinery. A prevalent native Aruban view was that they were much more motivated to succeed than the Arubans (Kalm 1974:223). The descendants of these workers today occupy professional and technical positions in tourism and other service industries. Despite their relatively high skill levels, however, there are few entrepreneurs in this group. Until the most recent waves of immigration (1986-1996), the English occupied the lowest ranks in the social hierarchy of the Island, even though they were by no means the lowest economically because of their high level of skills and education.

Automation of the refinery, and the dismissal of surplus workers, began in the 1950s.<sup>xxxii</sup> Many of the original English workers repatriated to their place of origin, while some decided to stay on. A few began to integrate consciously with the larger Aruban population through (limited) marriages, and through music. Others were able to transfer their skills into the Aruban economy by starting businesses, joining Aruban-owned firms, and by entering the tourism industry in large numbers.

## Migrants

Although all peoples on Aruba may be considered migrants to some degree, I use the term here to denote only those recently arrived and arriving groups, who are not yet legally Aruban.<sup>xxxiii</sup> These are casual and domestic workers from other parts of the English, French, and Spanish Caribbean, primarily, Santo Domingo, Grenada, Haiti, and Colombia. This last group are mainly women in extremely insecure domestic jobs, and other temporary (and sometimes illegal) immigrants in low-skilled occupations. These make up the lowest paid groups in the labor force. They also make up a good proportion of the illegal work force employed by the formal sector. Recent Spanish-speaking groups are by far the biggest wave of recent immigrants, and have had a strong economic and cultural impact on the Island. These newcomers are Latin American, and comprise groups frequently from the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, and Colombia.

Since the establishment of the refinery in the late 1920s, Aruba has offered a relatively greater opportunity for employment and higher wages than any other Caribbean Island (Kalm 1974:168). The Island has always experienced underemployment problems due to its fast growth rate, and lack of skilled labor within its indigenous populations. In 1945, Lago employed 5,747 workers, of whom only 32 percent were Aruban nationals.<sup>xxxiv</sup> In contrast to seasonal, temporary, or continuous migration, both the original group of refinery workers, and the more recent arrivals, would be characterized as recurrent migrants. These individuals make "irregular journeys of varying lengths of time, to obtain wage labor throughout their productive years" (Solien 1961:1268). Recurrent migrants, both men and women, are rarely accompanied by family members, and are either engaged by contract before they arrive, or register for permission to stay for three or six months, after which time they are required to leave the Island, at least for a short period. For many, it is their intention to achieve "permanent removal" from their place or origin (Solien 1961:1277). They try to settle more or less permanently in Aruba with their families, exchanging economic hardship for the hope of a better life. Until granted right of domicile, these migrants may be repatriated by the Island government at any time. They take up the slack in employment and are prepared to work harder for less wages. As one government informant commented "Non-national workers can be controlled. If they act up they can easily be deported and replaced" (Kalm 1974:172).

The government decision to enlarge the supporting infrastructure for the development of the tourism sector increased the demand for labor dramatically.<sup>xxxv</sup> As the available labor force was insufficient to meet the increase, 3,000 workers had arrived on the Island by 1990. In addition, up to 5,000 illegals are also thought to be on the Island in 1996. Many of these recent temporary immigrants may well become a permanent statistic of the Island's demography, as they are needed to maintain the tourism industry in the longer term. Thus, construction workers from Colombia, Venezuela, and the Dominican Republic, who are currently occupied in building more hotels, hotel staff housing, and time share condominiums, will most likely stay on and move into the private-housing construction area whose growth is increasing rapidly. Filipinos are being employed to work in the hotels in food services and housekeeping, because they come into frequent contact with hotel guests and are mild mannered and fair skinned like native Arubans.

Already the cultural effects are being felt. Education is being disrupted by the rather large groups of Spanish-speaking children (Emerencia 1998). Prostitution has grown as many of the workers are here without their families, and rather than allow native Aruban women to mix socially with these men, the government is turning a blind

eye to increased "tourist visits" by Dominican and Colombian prostitutes. Thus, a marked change has come about in the ethnic mix on the Island, as once again the native Aruban population is overwhelmed by migrants. As before, they are in a difficult situation. While they do not welcome these outsiders, they cannot or will not do these jobs themselves.

#### 1. Carnival grand parades

## CHAPTER SIX

### Discourses on "nativeness" in Aruba

Like other ethnic groups and plural communities, Arubans consciously maintain some aspects of their culture, language, music and social rituals, in order to define and sustain them as separate entities within the whole. These features of nativeness are consciously promoted and used in the construction of a distinct indigenous culture. The arenas in which these features are deployed and accessible for interpretation are in social representation, education, carnival, music, and the semiology of rural and urban spaces. In difficult economic periods, ethnic tensions have tended to rise (Alofs and Meirkes 1990). This has been accompanied by overt displays of symbols of identity. In addition to the play of difference within the Island itself, nativeness is fashioned also through relations with extraterritorial entities, notably, South and North America, and Holland. For example, a common theme is that Curacaons are descended from African slaves and "not like us." <sup>xxxvi</sup> With respect to Holland, a major cultural attribute acknowledged by many native Arubans is that because they have absorbed some Dutch culture through social interaction, they are better able to culturally differentiate themselves from their former colonizers (and kin), and "beat the Dutch at their own game. Yes, we know them very well now. We know how they negotiate. The Dutch men are clever, intelligent, but if you know their rules -- how they play it - then you can play them too."

But in order to protect themselves from being controlled or outmaneuvered by the Dutch, the native Arubans -- who are more subtle, less direct, and less authoritarian -- keep the Dutch confused by ambiguity. "We Arubans don't express everything we have inside. We like to keep the Dutch trying to figure out what it is." Today, native Islanders are feeling increasingly confident dealing with their own affairs. They do not want to be dependent on Holland, indeed, Dutch involvement in the Island's domestic affairs are kept at a "tolerable minimum," because over-dependence on Holland creates a weak image for Aruba as she tries to build relations with other regions (Croes and Alam 1990:99). When the Arubans pulled together successfully to rebuild their economy after the refinery closed in 1985, it added to their growing self-confidence as a distinct people, with the ability to meet difficult challenges.

Today, there is an emergent, yet palpable, notion of culture that operates in any native population (Tedlock and Mannheim 1995). It is more implied than asserted, more fluid than fixed, but sentient nevertheless. Its presence and processual form is suggested in an astute remark made to me by a native friend: "I think cultural flexibility is part of our national identity. I visualize our society as a stew pot. With a melting pot you do not recognize the ingredients. The stew pot you do recognize the ingredients. But which flavor dominates more, depends on the specific cook, the policy makers, or those who have influence." In attempting to control the cultural influences brought by increasing transnational flows natives are constructing the cultural future of the Island in their own terms -- neither, Dutch, nor Latin-American, North American, or Antillean, but Aruban through and through.

Performances that pertain to ideas of nativeness are found at different times, places, and spheres of social action. Some of these discourses are located within groups while others are located between groups. At the national level, identity is formulated through a competitive and sometimes contentious relationship between Aruba and other Islands and nations. All of these exchanges are subtexts to a broader metanarrative -- the struggle for the cultural future of Aruba.

On March 18, 1948, Aruba presented a petition to the Dutch government requesting a separate status. The Dutch resisted even though they had promised

autonomy during the war. In the ensuing years the quest for autonomy gained momentum, especially from Curacao who controlled the purse strings of all Islands within the Federation. As part of this endeavor, the increasing sense of autonomy was reflected in the development of visual symbols that set them apart from Curacao, the Netherlands Antilles, and from Holland. Aruba's growing national identity became integrally connected to symbols, flags, anthems, and other markers such as the divi-divi tree, the aloe plant, golden beaches and hospitality. In 1976, the song "*Aruba Dushi Tera*" was adopted as the national anthem:

<i>Aruba patria aprecia</i>	Aruba, our dear country,
<i>Nos cuna venera</i>	our venerated cradle,
<i>Chikito y simple bo por ta</i>	though small and simple you may be
<i>Pero si respeta</i>	you are indeed esteemed.
<i>Bo playanan tan admira</i>	Your beaches, so much admired,
<i>cu palmas tur dorna</i>	with palm trees all adorned,
<i>Bo escudo y bandera ta</i>	your coat of arms and flag,
<i>Orguyo di nos tur</i>	the symbols of our pride.
<i>Grandesa di bo pueblo ta</i>	The greatness of our people,
<i>su gran cordialidad</i>	is their great cordiality
<i>Cu Dios por guia y conserva</i>	with God to guide and preserve
<i>Su amor pa libertad</i>	your love for liberty

Chorus:

<i>O Aruba, dushi tera</i>	O Aruba, our sweet land
<i>nos baranca tan stima</i>	our rocks so well beloved
<i>nos amor pa bo ta asina grandi</i>	our love for you is strong
<i>cu n'tin nada pa kibre</i>	that nothing can destroy it
<i>cu n'tin nada pa kibre</i>	that nothing can destroy it

[Padu Lampe and Rufo Wever 1952]

In the same year, the Aruba flag was inaugurated.<sup>xxxvii</sup> The way in which the flag has been semiotically "loaded" to the point of being almost "top-heavy" denotes the effort towards self-representation. It has four colors: bunting yellow, United Nations blue, Union Jack red, and white. Elements include a red-white star and two yellow stripes. All colors and elements of the flag are symbolic. The blue background represents the sea that surrounds the Island. The four-pointed star symbolizes the position of Aruba in the ocean, the four coasts and four maritime and aerial routes from where the Island's economy emanates, and where the tourists arrive from, and depart to. The red-white star symbolizes the immense affection each citizen has for the Island. It also denotes the Island's ancient industry of Brazilwood, and pays tribute to the Indian blood that was spilled in the French Pass for their liberty. The white border around the star symbolizes the extensive snow-white beaches that surround the Island. At the same time, it represents the purity of the hearts and inhabitants of Aruba who have a high respect for justice, order, and liberty. The horizontal yellow stripes denote the free and separate position of Aruba in the same sea, without distancing itself from the other Island's and nations. Yellow is the color of abundance. It represents the Island's petroleum and aloe industries, which, along with commerce and tourism, provides a source of income for the people. It also symbolizes the historic mining of gold. The yellow stripes show also the solidity and the lasting economic stability of the Island. Aruba eventually seceded from the Netherlands Antilles constellation of Islands in 1986.

### Ken ta Arubano? A native social taxonomy

*Ken ta Arubano* is an often asked question on Aruba. Whether you are native or of foreign descent is still of central importance to many people in the question of who is a “real” Aruban (Emerencia 1998, Alofs and Meirkes 1990). A visitor to the Island with no knowledge of its culture history might construe the population as comprising two main groups: the predominantly mestizo natives, and the Afro-British West Indians, with a scattering of Dutch, Chinese and East Indians. In fact, as noted in chapter five, the socio-cultural complexity of the Island is considerable. The following interpretation has been interpolated from native- as opposed to non-native views of the social structure. It is based on the principle that natives tend to sort individuals into groups within the societal structure according to their degree of Arubanness. Natives define themselves in terms designed to differentiate themselves from increasing numbers of foreign immigrants. This is a challenging task given the intrinsic disposition of their character which is based on hybrid form. Further, there are only a few symbols of relative indigeneity which are associated primarily with natives -- the native lingua, Papiamentu, Indian ancestry, certain foods, the festival of dera gai (Arubanized festival of San Juan), and two localized forms of regional music -- the tumba and the dande. Although both Papiamentu and the tumba are shared with Bonaire and Curacao these are differently nuanced between territories (see glossary). Native Arubans also claim for themselves an ethos which is manifested as a subtle set of ideal social behaviors and values embodied in different kinds of social behaviors and expressive performances.

Individuals and groups are ordered into a status hierarchy by the native Arubans according to their distance from themselves. The degree of this proximity is defined by an abundance or deficiency of native characteristics. In this way, each group is assigned a position within the social hierarchy, each with some kind of boundary between themselves and others based on certain claimed or ascribed features. This native view of Aruban society is noted also by non-native Islanders. However, this model is nuanced differently by individuals depending on their location within the color-ethnic and socio-economic spheres. The native ordering of the population establishes a principle of paramountcy for themselves.

As outlined in chapter five, broadly speaking, Island groups comprise two types: Arubans and migrants (the latter are not citizens). The Arubans comprise native Arubans, Afro-Arubans, and Emigres (representing diverse ethnicities). The native Arubans place people into one of three categories: “outsiders,” “outsider-insiders,” and “insiders.” Recent immigrants are categorized as outsiders, while Afro-Arubans and Emigre Arubans are categorized as outsider-insiders. Only the native Arubans may be considered insiders or *Arubano autentico* (so-called “real” Arubans). The outsider groups are beyond, but do affect, the Aruban social sphere. The outsider-insiders occupy the periphery, while the insiders comprise the central core of society that cultivates and reproduces the paramount native state.

The features considered central to native identity are constituted in anthropological rather than juridical terms, and embodied within symbols, rather than rights. To be an Aruban citizen does not make one a native Islander. It appears unlikely that outsider-insiders, like the Afro-Arubans or the Emigres, will ever be socially absorbed deeply enough to pass into the native state. At least, not in the foreseeable future. There is, however, an ambiguous category of belonging which might be characterized as a state of inclusiveness. This is a liminal identity which situates a few non-native individuals on the boundary between the periphery and center of nativeness. It is this category of honorary native, that an Emigre might possibly occupy. This status

is achieved through a possessed combination of essential and acquired traits. These comprise citizenship, acceptable somatic characteristics such as a light skin color, the ability to speak and use the native language well, and the exhibition of a general ethos that is deemed native in local terms. This latter is constituted around a set of social manners associated with a gentle demeanor, respectfulness, friendliness, reciprocity, and loyalty.

### **1. Girls like frilly dresses**

### On being Indian

The Indian past is becoming increasingly part of the cognitive present for natives. In discussing their ethno-cultural origins, every native I spoke to identified Indian heritage as a primary marker of indigeneity. This idea took on greater significance in the 1970s when Arubans noted that indigenous Indian leaders in South America were appropriating the term "Indian" as a mark of social difference to the nationals. In this way, they began to convert the once (and often still is in many regions) discriminatory label into a legitimate player in the political arena (Hill 1988:15). An archaeological museum gathered together and mounted informative displays of Arawak material culture, and the Cas di Cultura presented Aruban cultural shows with native music and dance (Alofs and Meirkes 1990). On Aruba, this was the period of political separation from Curacao in which an "Aruba for Arubans" way of thinking emerged (Green 1974). This generated a fierce resentment towards outsider-insiders. A positive recognition of their own Indian heritage was used in comparing themselves with Curacaons who were of African heritage, and from other Island groups who were overwhelming the Island with their numbers and otherness.

The native Islanders are proud of their Indian heritage and will say they have no African blood. They attribute their shy and quiet manner to their Indian ancestry (Green 1974). Some myths, beliefs, herbal medicines, and child care practices are also perceived as having been handed down from the Indians. Dark, straight Indian hair is valued more than kinky hair, although blonde hair with its European associations is still strongly preferred. Certain family names (Tromp, Arends, Lacle, Kelly, Geerman, Boekhoudt) affirm an historic relationship to the earliest European settlers who married into the Indian population.

### Issues of nativeness in language and education

Other locations of social discourse of native identity are to be found in the discussion of the relative merits of Dutch and Papiamentu and in the current deconstruction of the Dutch education system. It is not an easy task to build a distinct cultural or national identity within the context of an alien education system. Under Dutch colonialism the Arubans have had little opportunity to develop a sense of themselves as a distinct people, in large part, because the Dutch have always expected the Arubans to adjust to their culture and language (Hoetink 1990:250, Prins-Winkel 1983:9-22, Wood 1969:77-86). The Dutch education system will remain the antithesis to Aruban cultural development as long as it disregards the relevance of indigenous traditions and language. The Dutch insist that Papiamentu is not a "proper" language, merely a dialect of Spanish, and of no use in the modern world. Students continue to learn about Holland and its culture as if it were their own culture, from books depicting a blue eyed, blond haired population. Many believe that without an education system crafted in native terms, students will continue to fail academically. As the language of the colonizer, Dutch is rather disliked (Hoetink 1990; Keur 1960; Emerencia 1995). People tell me that it is a harsh language, unmusical. Many Hollanders regard Papiamentu as a low-level dialect of Spanish:

Papiamentu is not a language, it is a dialect of Spanish. It is a simple language for simple people, The Arubans are simple people. It is better to educate a few in the Dutch language so they can think better. For the rest, they should keep a Papiamentu-speaking underclass. They still need people who don't think to do

the menial tasks (Piet van Bok [pseudonym]).

This opinion on Papiamentu is contrary to the findings of several language scholars (Wood 1969, Alleyne 1974). However, because Aruba is still tied economically, juridically, and educationally to Holland, the importance of the Dutch language is likely to be stressed for some time to come. Many people believe, however, that unfortunately the Dutch education system instills Dutch values and leaves Aruban students with little opportunity to explore their history and culture in their own terms (Emerencia 1995, 1998, Martis 1983). As one concerned teacher asserted:

Dutch education plays a damaging role in the development of Aruban culture. The books they use have nothing to do with their culture. Implicitly, this system undermines their own culture, the students become dysfunctional. The Dutch language is isolating. Who does it tie you to? Only to the Dutch, and the Dutch are aware of that. They say the native language is only good for use in family, for jokes etcetera. They say you can't use Papiamentu for higher forms of thinking [Crispin Bruce].

As the central symbol in the re-orientation towards native culture, the role and importance of Papiamentu is being promoted by the Department of Education's National Reform Project (Emerencia 1998). This effort is being contested by the Dutch, and by some Euro-centric native Arubans. Certainly, the Island's cultural future rests in large measure on the outcome of this effort which will decide whether future Aruba will be defined in its own terms, and in its own language, or in outsider terms and languages. Some native educators are now beginning to hope that early in the next millennium, Dutch will be replaced by Papiamentu in all domains, although retained (along with English and Spanish) as an important second language (Martis 1983).

As native Arubans simultaneously look forwards to an internationally-oriented, materially desirable but homogenizing future, and backwards to a culturally meaningful but fast receding native past, this introduces contradictions between what people want, and what they need -- goals which are not always compatible. The political parties are positioning themselves to address both these orientations. On the one hand, they present themselves as rational, modern, and competent managers of the future. On the other hand, some represent themselves as true natives or regular folk "*buchiwang*" and articulate a respect and value for the past, at least in rhetorical terms. The two main political parties -- the Aruban People's Party (AVP), and the Election Movement of the People (MEP) -- are at pains to point out the native pedigree of their candidates in order to distinguish themselves from insider-outsiders for the electorate. Each pledges to sustain and protect *nos patrimonio*, that sense of respect and love for one's own people and culture, as well as claiming the credentials necessary for guiding the Island into the information age and beyond.

Since Status Aparte, however, and with the increasing sense of a separate national identity from Holland and the Caribbean region as a whole, the value for, and use of Papiamentu in government and among the population as a whole has increased. Today Papiamentu is the Island's most widely spoken language, understood and used by all Arubans, whatever their ethnic backgrounds. It is a truly integrative symbol of Aruban nationalism, even though many people also speak the language of their origins in their homes, for example, English, Spanish, French Creole, Chinese, Arabic, and so on.

The second most spoken language on Aruba is English which became important for employment in the American oil refinery after 1928 and increasingly today in the

tourism sector which has grown steadily since the 1950s. The use of English is reinforced through frequent contact with American tourists (80% of visitors), increasing business relations with the United States, music and video entertainment, and through radio and television broadcasts (sports, CNN, and films).

Spanish is also exerting a strong cultural influence on Aruba's language and culture. This is occurring through immigration and intermarriage and from radio and television broadcasts from Venezuela, especially soap operas. Spanish is widely understood and is considered the language of romance. Spanish songs are in the majority in the popular music charts. One politician comments interestingly on the cultural and linguistic influences on Papiamentu:

If you look at the words of Papiamentu, everything that has to do with school is Dutch, everything that has to do with parties is Spanish, "fiesta" and so on, so you have to look where the words come from. All words that have something to do with church are Spanish, because the first priests were Spanish [Mito Croes].

Issues of language and education also play into Aruba's carnival in different ways. The opinion that language and the aesthetics of performance defines different ethnic groups is widely given. The use of spoken or written language in parades (Dutch, English, Spanish, Chinese, or Papiamentu) signals the ethnic, Island, or national origins of the group. Language use is salient also in calypso and tumba music. Tumba is favored by natives, and calypsos by the English. The holding of the Calypsonian and Tumba King (and queen) contests in the two towns respectively is highly symbolic of the ethnic, linguistic, and regional divisions on the Island. The English do not enter the tumba competition, but native Aruban singers often enter the Calypsonian contest in San Nicolas although they have never won the crown. Despite their popularity across all Island groups, their performances are never favored by the San Nicolas people. I asked King Surpriser if a native Aruban would ever win the Calypsonian title:

No, because the feeling is not there. This thing is feeling. If they sing tumba, the feeling is there. The accent too, you don't have to be a four-star singer to sing calypso, because the calypso is about tongue, about accent, and a way of "pronounciatin" the words [King Surpriser].

and from Lord Cobashi:

We in Aruba, have adopted Trinidad style. The population of Aruba, which are the natives, they speak their native tongue which is Papiamentu. They would not fully understand what the real Trinidadians sing because of the expressions. The natives go for tumba because its in their language, so they know what its all about [Lord Cobashi].

## **1.Rhythm of life**

## The signifying landscape

Roger Keesing asserts that the past, both ancient and recent, is discernible in the physical landscape. History can be re-remembered from old settlement sites and religious shrines, from beaten paths and watering places to rocky outcroppings that mark the place of confrontations or seductions. But most often, he continues, the past is celebrated as a time of autonomy, ancestral power, and exemplary virtue (Keesing 1992:18). The landscape of Aruba reveals its own similar semantic layering. The native experience and telling of the land is only one of many. Each Island group, and within them each generation and family, has experienced the Island in different terms.

When isolated from the discourse of other Island groups, native talk on land and place itself embodies striking and contradictory tropes or attitudes. These expose an underlying community tension between tradition and modernity. Perspectives derive from transnational influences, for example, Dutch environmentalism and international tourism and conflicting local ideas of economic development between profit oriented business and a tradition-oriented way of life with a cultural preservation ideology. It is the play of difference between these tropes that reveals one wellspring of native identity. Today the Aruban landscape has become a contested site of meanings reflecting a diversity of conflicting goals, values, and orientations that individuals and groups hold for the future. Ideas of place are found within three distinctive views or tropes. These come from a Dutch perspective, the Aruban business sector, and the more traditionally-minded native Arubans.

Holland's recent attitude towards the land in Aruba is one of conservation and they have encouraged re-vegetation through planting native species, precipitation containment, and anti-erosion measures for coastal areas. Environmental education is being introduced also into the school curriculum and native Arubans educated in agriculture and environmentalism in Holland are themselves agents of this view. Adoption (largely through lip service) of an environmentalistic ethic denotes, for natives, a modern, with-the-times, nation. Although the Arubans traditionally kept their own *cunucus* and *hoffis* (fruit gardens) tidy, the concept of taking responsibility for the environment beyond your own homestead is relatively new. Pragmatically, both commerce and government supports the beautification of Aruba (re-shaping through an imported aesthetic trope), environmental management, and the preservation of the historic landscape *because* it makes long term economic sense to do so. Stimulus for this has come also from tourism which has had to respond to the complaints of U.S. tour operators who say: "the tourists don't like to see garbage strewn around and will stop coming unless you clean the place up."

A second trope is located in the Aruban business sector who in their efforts for quick returns and through their effective lobbying of government departments (through kinship and political affiliation) have put enormous pressures on the natural environment through urban development. Land has been cleared at a furious pace with little thought for its effects on the environment or on the socio-cultural impact on the Arubans. More recently, the demand that government respond quickly to fulfill their electoral promises, in particular, a home for every family -- has caused a rapid and haphazard parceling out of public lands.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

This is having a negative impact on the ecological environment as it is suffocated by the flotsam and jetsam of modernity. Traditional farming activities have all but ceased. Energy resources are being strained. The Island's wildlife is disappearing rapidly as the spreading urban landscape pushes it out onto the infertile rocky coastline. These environmental problems have arisen from the relative smallness of the Island as different activities and domains interfere with one another.<sup>xxxix</sup>

The third trope is framed by the traditional native view which reads the landscape in the romantic terms of the past. The idea that the land and its historic pattern of use is a symbol of nativeness is compatible with the Dutch environmentalist perspective in that it wishes to preserve ecological equilibrium (but not for nature's sake). Thinking about and using the land in the mode of the past achieves a kind of *communitas* for Arubans (Turner 1969). Natives love to fish, especially line fishing for crabs, and some build *ranchos* (overnight camps made from driftwood) in the *bocas* (lagoons). Most make frequent pilgrimages to large rock formations where the Indians (perhaps) once held religious ceremonies and have left their presence etched in the white, black and ocher paintings in the caves beneath. And, everyone regards *pan bati*, or sorghum bread, as an indigenous food. These activities are not ritually or economically necessary, but they are significant practices that concretize the idea of a native continuum. Folktales about the history and meaning of some parts of the Island are also more myth than fact. However, this is irrelevant since, as Frake has found, "the image of the countryside ... whatever its authenticity, is an image that brings satisfaction to those who see the countryside through its lens" (Frake 1992:24). I stress here, however, that many of these professed significances are more at the level of feeling than of serious praxis. All Arubans consider themselves modern and aspire to benefit from the wealth the changing landscape portends. Returning to a former way of life is not desired in reality. Ideal and real co-exist at different places in the mind.

As the landscape is re-shaped away from a idealized image of the past towards the desired image of a modern future, anxiety manifests over the loss of the past in both symbolic and tangible terms. Some native Islanders advance that developing and deploying ideas and overt symbols of native culture will offer some protection and resilience against change. It is the Aruban's historical relationship to the land, however difficult though this relationship has been, that still serves, in part, to symbolize their identity today. For the native Islanders, these symbols of place constitute also, to borrow a phrase by James Fernandez, "a room full of mirrors in which we can see ourselves in order to return to the whole" (Fernandez 1986: 178-184).

Ownership of land denotes an ancestral continuum which equates with being a real or native Aruban. People still plant fruit trees and maintain small kitchen gardens, and some still plant and harvest corn and aloe. As segments of the local population become increasingly affluent, they still look to the *cunucu* to recapture a sense of place and identity. Some are building elaborate first or second homes in the countryside, modeled on the style of the *ranchos* with their *cunucu* house and cactus fences or diorite rock walls.<sup>x1</sup> A few of these are remarkably palatial, and ironically, modeled on homes that were not found on Aruba, but on Curacao in the form of the grand *landhuisen* (country house) found on the plantation estates of the slave-owning Sephardics and Protestant Dutch. For the less affluent, although traditional farming activities have all but ceased (at a practical level, people prefer the conveniences of modern living), the genuinely old *cunucus* are still maintained and valued as symbols of the past and families still gather there for meaningful events.

Arubans have always been district-oriented and until quite recently, the Island was divided into *barios* with little social contact between them. There is still a good deal of sociability and a sense of close community and small town friendliness in the different *barios*. Marriage still tends to be within the kin group, and the native Aruban marriage systems of first cousin marriage and sibling exchange are still highly characteristic of native Aruban social organization. An individual's social status within the native population still derives largely from his or her family background (Phalen 1977). Even today, there is a marked preponderance of names associated with different districts - Croes in Santa Cruz, Tromp in Noord, Arends in Oranjestad, and so on. During carnival

season, people withdraw into their district clubs to demonstrate family and regional allegiance. Competitions for districts queens can be “hot,” with the idea of community support central to elections at every level.

Island districts are also associated with different degrees of nativeness. The town of San Nicolas with its Afro-Aruban population is furthest away in terms of social distance from the native core. It is the oil town, culturally defined by the American presence, and shaped over the decades by an English Caribbean influence. Outsiders, prostitutes, drugs, bars, and marginalized lower class Spanish-speaking immigrants live there. In 1927 there were over 1,500 Venezuelans employed by Lago who mixed freely and intermarried with the native population (Giacalone 1990:224). More recently, a large Spanish-speaking Latin-American population is making its cultural presence felt. San Nicolas as otherspace is referred to locally as “Chocolate City” or, the “town above the bridge.”

The most native of Aruban places are in the heart of the *cunucu* -- or as the native Arubans call it, *tras di lomba di Dios* (behind the back of God) or *di chapo* (an old fashioned place). Here live the true *Arubano autentico* (real Arubans), the *buchiwang* (regular folk). The most revered areas are those once inhabited by the Indians whose souls, Island mythology claims, reside in the tall cacti. The barrio of Noord is considered native in that the population there has a high proportion of Indian blood. The Casibari and Ayo diorite rock formations with their ancient Indian rock paintings, the deep Indian caves at Fontein, the Frenchman's Pass, where local legend holds that French pirates fought and killed a group of Indians whose spirits now haunt the area (Geerman 1994:6), and Alto Vista, an early Indian settlement and the site of Aruba's first Catholic mission, are also important native places.

### “Cunucu”

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Performing identity through festivals

#### The performance of culture

The principal attraction of cultural performances lies in their nature as reflexive instruments of cultural expression (Bauman 1992:46). It is for this reason that I chose to examine the two spheres of festival performance on Aruba where local cultural identities are specifically expressed. These are in the carnival, and the folkloric dande festival.<sup>xli</sup> While performance arises out of the flow of every day life, some are specifically planned, ritualized and highly embodied. These are found in the performing arts and in public festivals. Roger Abrahams refers to them as "big performances" where roles tend to be precast and scripted (Abrahams 1986:63).

In the sphere of expressive performance, the biggest performance is the Island's annual pre-Lenten carnival. It is a significant festival because it creates a designated setting in which different cultural sensibilities can appear (Myerhoff 1984:155). The Aruban carnival is fundamentally about the construction and negotiation of identity. It is a time and place when Islanders are at their most reflexive as they make decisions about how to represent themselves and each other in the many costumed street parades and competitive events. Music, too, plays a vital role in the location of selves by marking differences between societal groups, and by evoking collective memories with intensity and power (Stokes 1994:3-6). This process is manifested in the various musical genres which are identified with either the Afro-Arubans or the native Arubans. The calypso, tumba, steelband, asambeho, and dande draw attention to cultural difference through their aesthetic construction and communicative power, especially during festivals as competing genres.

#### Studying carnivals

Carnivals are fertile objects of study, in part because they bring communities out into the streets where behaviors can be observed and voices heard. As a ritual time and space for personal and group expression, and because of its customary permissiveness, the carnival provides a potent soap-box from which a community may comment upon itself. The underprivileged, in particular, are afforded the opportunity to air their discontents. To study carnival, therefore, is to focus on the particular since the festival feeds off its immediate socio-political context. But as a parochial event, it is not easily read from outside. For this reason, to understand the carnival's implicit and explicit narratives we first must appreciate the context of their production.

It is a community expression suspending the rules of everyday life with mask and costume as support. The festival also provides a pressure valve for the release of social tensions which build up in all communities. The word carnival means literally "a farewell to flesh" from the Latin *carne vale*. In the classic folkloric sense, it is a primarily urban festival which takes place in a seasonal cycle designated by Van Gennep as "the cycle of the Lenten carnival" (Mesnil 1987:186). Because Catholics ideally must fast and abstain from licentious behaviors during Lent, the pre-Lenten season is a "time out of time" (Falassi 1987) when people take over the streets and indulge in exhibitionist social behaviors normally frowned upon by the community during Lent. Cross-dressing, undressing, open displays of love-making, the celebration of gay culture, over eating, and heavy drinking and fighting, are common pursuits in carnival. But the festival is not simply a disorganized, wild, noisy, fun-filled party in the streets, it is also an organized

series of events in which individuals and groups participate in earnest. Today, carnival is a recreational spectacle enjoyed by all groups and classes as well as by outsiders and tourists. It is a festival enjoyed and consumed as a product (Rector 1984:151).

Music (especially drumming), dance, costume and parade are central to carnival celebrations, and commonly emphasize aspects of local culture and national folklore. In this sense, carnival is not simply a display of parading floats and maskers but represents, in part, the ethos of a community. Existing anthropological studies generally view carnival as a popular, largely secular urban festival, that may be construed as a (mainly) symbolic discourse that inverts, reinforces, and neutralizes social structures and reveals a heterogeneity of social realities and fantasies. While the festival delights by upsetting things and creating a public disturbance simply for the fun of it (Abrahams 1987:178), it also unmask local social tensions (Fiehrer and Lodwick 1990:7). Most importantly, public festivals like carnival are opportunistically utilized in the process of self-authentication (Abrahams 1987:177), in which symbolic forms are deployed to reflect the organization of group boundaries.

On Aruba, specific events mobilize particular cultural affiliations and reveal the underlying conflicts that exist between ethnicities, social classes, and the structures of authority. The Aruban calypso, steelband, tumba, and mas themes, in particular, serve as symbolic culture-ethnic markers to differentiate between selves and others. Carnival themes employ pastiche and allegory to explore, reinforce, or reinvent historical traditions and cultural narratives in playful ways. The festival encompasses diverse social and political commentaries which speak out on everyday problems such as child abuse, immigration, illegal aliens, money laundering, declining social morals, alcoholism and drug abuse, and the demise of language and cultural traditions.

The normative model for the study of twentieth-century carnivals has been adapted from the works of Van Gennep (1960), Gluckman (1963), and Leach (1961). This archetype holds that because of its similarities to rites of passage and other cyclical festivities, carnival should be analyzed as a set of rituals of reversal and inversion which turn the everyday world upside down. Many studies of carnival refer to this model directly or indirectly, and attempt in some way to coax the fluidity and ambiguity of carnival life into models of, and models for, social life. In studying Caribbean festivals in Antigua, Toronto, and the West Indian diaspora, Frank Manning noted that players express their relations to broader social and political contexts and structures and to each other through competitive behaviors and political maneuverings (Manning 1977, 1984, 1990). A common discourse in Caribbean festival is the criticism of the cultural impacts of widespread Americanization. As the principle celebratory social ritual, some small-Island carnivals have taken on a nativistic quality that serves to revitalize local culture and counter-balance the continuing influences of the colonial metropolises. The Trinidad carnival is one of the most studied and thoroughly understood festivals and, according to Daniel Crowley (1956), has been shaped, by cultural contributions from medieval Europe, West Africa, and local innovations. His work is important for its detailed documentation of the historic forms, social behaviors, and political influences embodied in Trinidad's greatest festival.

Another Caribbeanist, Errol Hill (1972), has authored a remarkable history of the Trinidad carnival illustrating how aspects of local culture have been structured and presented in a variety of essentially theatrical forms. As a potential focus of expression, carnival provides an excellent time and place for Trinidad's diverse Island cultures, ethnicities, and social classes to express their differences, and through play, escape the pressures of everyday life. Paradoxically, this freedom generates another pressure, one that derives from contest, competition, and the desire to excel all others in perfection (Hill 1976:82). He asserts that, studied historically, the Trinidad carnival provides an

illuminating study of cultural change and synthesis over one hundred and fifty years (Hill 1976:54). The work of Dan Crowley (1956) and Errol Hill (1972, 1976), in addition to Alexander Orloff (1981) and James Frazer (1959) has provided much of the historic material on carnivals used in this thesis.

John Stewart (1986), has examined the politicization process in Trinidad's carnival, where patronage and control by middle-class Creole leadership has turned the festival into a grand spectator event in which spontaneous participation has all but disappeared. In the late 1960s, concerned with strengthening the psychological and cultural identity of the nation, a governmental policy was devised to link cultural identity with tourism through entertainment. Under this policy carnival was pursued as a "venture in cultural patriotism" under a central carnival committee. Consequently, from a reflexive and rebellious past, the Trinidad carnival has become the tool of leadership whose objectives are to control political power and its public support and to cultivate the image of a society "transcending racial, social, and cultural divisiveness from the colonial past" (Stewart 1986:291-314).

Today, the Trinidad carnival is an eclectic system burdened with often contradictory social impulses and objectives. Many participants feel that it is not meant to be a spectator event, but a communal activity that ought to be free of bureaucratic interference and commercial exploitation. But Stewart notes that recent highly intellectualized levels of "overt thematic symbolism" in performance have brought a fresh level of consciousness to carnival. He suggests that this tension between tradition and innovation, the conflict between permissiveness and control, and the creative energy at the heart of the carnival may enable the festival to survive against the constraints of political sponsorship (Stewart 1986:291-314).

Collectively, these studies tend to build upon the notion that carnivals reflect the social and political structures of the producing society, either in their statements of opposition through inversion, or through their reaffirmation in mirrored performances. All view carnival as a contested site of meanings in which institutional structures and individual autonomy clash over social, political, and moral control over the festival, especially where it is viewed as a potent symbol of community. In this sense, Caribbean carnivals continue to be shaped and contexted by local social and political interests and actions, and by external influences and spontaneous innovations.

This exploration of Aruban carnival similarly seeks to interpret its implicit and explicit meanings through the mirror of social action, symbolic discourse, and performance. Aruba shares many of the features of other Caribbean carnivals, notably those pertaining to social and political contestations and negotiations, the revitalization of indigenous cultural forms, and the tensions and conflicts that arise between free and unfettered expression, and rigid institutional control. Emile Durkheim (1915, 1938) observed that the function of some societal rituals is to solidify and stabilize a society by expressing a collective consciousness through shared symbolic representation. This appears to hold true for some highly symbolic masquerade themes that are heuristically deployed by native Arubans to reorient players and spectators towards a positive self-evaluation.

However, as in all societies, the interiority of an outwardly perceived collective conscience comprises a heterogeneous range of values, and ethos. For example, native Aruban players tend to organize along social-class lines, and possess markedly different attitudes towards history and the future of Aruban society. There is a great deal of idiosyncrasy too, as individuals exploit the carnival season according to some specific social or political agenda. Thus, while many players appear to be going with the flow of events, with a kind of collective consciousness apparent in many religious rituals, in this secular event, some are attempting to control the flow with purposeful intent. By focusing

on how symbol complexes are constructed and framed in meaningful performance, I seek to show what carnival reveals about the diversity of Aruban identities.

### **1. Tradition and modernity**

## Carnival in the Caribbean

Since the development of the tourist industry in the Caribbean, carnival has been commercialized to the point that, in recent years, even nominally Protestant Islands have established this festival. But Trinidad's carnival was the first and remains the most elaborate. It has also provided the model for many other carnivals within the Caribbean, and for many other regions of the world where Trinidadians and other West Indians have migrated: London, Toronto, and New York. Although each carnival is unique to a particular territory, for all, it is the most common focus for the expression of insular images and identities (Manning 1984:31)

Throughout the Caribbean, carnival has become a celebration of Latin-American, Caribbean, and African identity. The festival embodies an aesthetic derived from early European, African, and Asian traditions brought to the West Indies between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as from twentieth-century publications, broadcasts, and artistic movements. It has been suggested that Caribbean festivals have been shaped by a creole aesthetic; a blend of ethnicities, religions, and political orientations intrinsic to the color, themes, music, and spirit of festival arts (Bettelheim et al 1988). A Caribbean soup called *callaloo*, comprising many different ingredients, is offered as an appropriate metaphor for carnival (Bettelheim et al 1988:32). African rhythms and European melodies, English folk theater and historic dramas, and West African masquerade traditions with their colorful and expressive costumes combine in exuberant performances. Art historian Robert Faris Thompson has called this assemblage a "high affect" aesthetic.<sup>xlii</sup> Ancient African masquerade materials such as wood, cloth, animal bone, raffia, feathers, horns, leaves, and shells combine with the modern technological world of mirrors, light bulbs, sequins, beach balls, plastic whistles, beads, and magazine cutouts.<sup>xliii</sup>

The carnival costumes of Aruba also resonate with an expression of her ethnically diverse heritage. The images of indigenous Indian tribes, African heroes, yellow-haired Dutch, and dark-haired Spanish and other Mediterranean peoples are always present in the parades in one form or another. An equally strong metaphor for what we see at work in Aruba's carnival, would be the colorful fragrant stew known as *stoba*, where all the ingredients, despite being simmered together for over forty years, have remained distinguishable.

Aruba's carnival is built upon the foundations of the Trinidad carnival, one of the world's most spectacular celebrations which epitomizes the richness and creativity of the Caribbean. The French plantocracy brought their carnival to British-ruled Trinidad sometime after 1783 (Hill 1976:54). In the beginning the celebrations were highlighted by fashionable balls where the elite white planter class dressed like their field slaves, *negue jadin*, and danced to African drum rhythms. The slaves, however, were excluded except when entertaining their masters. After emancipation in 1834, the freed blacks celebrated their own carnival, adding their own African traditions of masquerading, and a (mainly) West African aesthetic in music, theme and costume: stick fighting dances, masked animal bush spirits, devil spirits, and spirits that walked on stilts. The freed slaves dressed in white masks to parody their former masters. The central theme of the black carnival was the Canboulay (Fr. *cannes brulees*--burning cane), a street parade symbolizing the violence inflicted on slaves.<sup>xliv</sup> If plantations caught fire, slaves were rounded up and driven with whips to fight the fires. In reference to this event, carnival celebrants oiled and blackened their bodies and paraded through the streets of Port-of-Spain carrying chains, sticks, and whips. Stick battles (derived from an African dance and sport), were fought in the streets, often becoming violent (Orloff 1981:72).

Many hundreds of indentured laborers were brought in to replace the freed

slaves. These included Asian Indians, English, Scots, Irish, Germans, Italians, Chinese, Portuguese, Venezuelans, and free West Africans, adding to the lower class-elements of the already rowdy street parades. Outraged by these rude and dangerous festivities, the white elite withdrew to the safety their mansions and their own refined celebrations. For the next fifty years carnival remained in the hands of the lower-class blacks. Even the colored middle classes disassociated themselves from the plebeian celebration (Juneja 1990:87). In 1881, the British banned the Sunday Canboulay parades after some particularly violent street riots, and the carnival was gradually brought under control. The white elite returned their celebrations to the streets, parading up and down in their carriages (Pearse 1956:190). They were soon joined by Trinidadians of all ethnicities and classes who formed a variety of masked bands.

Africa and France were by no means the only source for the characters and costumes of Trinidad carnival. According to Errol Hill (1976), accounts of the time testify that Indians, Spanish peons from Venezuela, and poor whites had already begun to portray an astonishing array of masquerade themes including African slaves, Creoles, South American Indians, Turks, Highlanders, English Royalty, Pirates, and Death. In addition, military bands from different countries were a regular feature from an early date, and by 1900 the big Historical bands had been established. In 1935 there were over fourteen mas categories. Carnival today is acceptable to, and practiced by, all class and ethnic groups of the Trinidadian community. An estimated 100,000 people appear in costume during the two-day festival in a stunning expression of national creativity and togetherness (Hill 1976:58-9). Even the old Sunday Canboulay procession has been restored, now known as Dimanche Gras or Fat Sunday.

The Caribbean calypso developed in Trinidad. It is a blend of African rhythm and European melody (of mainly Spanish origin). The precise origins of the calypso are unknown but its form is grounded in African musical traditions including praise songs, work songs, and in the defiant songs sung by slaves during revolts. In the plantations of the Caribbean, slave work groups called "gayaps" would competitively taunt each other through song, inventing, improvising, and indulging in mockery and ridicule (Quevedo 1983:5). Many African songs are sung as a recitative or chant by one singer, with members of the chorus singing the refrain in a call and response pattern.

Hill (1976:61) asserts that the first appearance of the term calypso to denote the Trinidad carnival song occurred around 1900. The lyric of a carnival song published in English in the Gazette, January 20, 1900, carried the title "1900 Masquerade Calipso." The title suggests that this song was a roadmarch which had been composed for chanting on the streets in carnival.<sup>xiv</sup> In discussing the origins of the calypso tradition, Keith Warner (1985) says that the calypso began its development in the late eighteenth century at the time of French settlement, when Pierre Begorrat from Martinique settled in Trinidad. He lived a rather royal existence, and frequently held courts, attended by African slave singers of *cariso*. The most important of these was Gros Jean. As Trinidad's first chantwell (a derivative from the French *chanterelle* meaning soloist) Gros Jean improvised as he sang, creating lyrics to flatter, tease, or insult members of the plantation community. Occasionally, chantwells would engage in a war of insults between two or more expert singers. This custom became known as "picong" (Warner 1985:9).

Chantwells initially sang in their own African languages. Later they sang in French and Creole, then after 1898, in English. In the early twentieth century, the chantwells were accompanied by orchestras composed of quattros, guitars, veras, and shak-shaks (see glossary) and addressed their songs chiefly to an illiterate working class. The calypso served as their newspaper to convey information and disseminate juicy gossip about the affairs of individuals from every strata of society (Hill 1976:69).

With his biting lyrics and mocking satire, the chantwell evolved into the Calypsonian (Warner 1985:10).

In the poorer areas of Port-of-Spain, rival gangs formed. Carnival provided an outlet for their creative energies, as well as their frustrations. Each band had its lead singer whose task was to harangue the stick-fighters into action and pour scorn on the rival groups and champions. During the weeks before carnival, the various bands practiced new songs in "tents." In 1900, these comprised bamboo structures whose inside areas were illuminated with kerosene flambeaux. After the first World war, these rehearsals became so popular that a number of innovations were necessary: the Calypsonian performed from raised platform, the audience were provided with folding chairs, gas lighting, and the shows were advertised with the sale of seating tickets. Although today the pre-season shows are held in rented halls, and other public-access places with sophisticated sound systems and other amenities, these are still referred to as calypso tents.

The practice of using combative titles such as the Duke of Wellington, the Iron Duke, Lord Executor, and King Pharaoh was established during the Boer Wars (1900) as a show of support for the British troops (Hill 1972:73-74). The distinctive characteristics of the calypso are in its metric time, African rhythm, and the half tone. The rhythm is the direct outcome of its African origins and its progeny in the West Indies: bongo, kalenda, belair, and the worksong. Other musical influences were absorbed into the calypso over time, such as American blues, soul and jazz, and Jamaican reggae (Hebdige 1987:38-39), all these elements forming the basis of calypso today.

The steelband is a twentieth century innovation. In the post-emancipation Trinidad carnival, the drum and shak-shak provided rhythmic accompaniment in the parades until the 1890s when the Venezuelan string bands were introduced into the festival. These bands consisted of a guitar, cuatro, mandolin, banjo, and maracas (Hill 1976:61). It accompanied the calypso singer at his or her concert before the parade, and as leader of the carnival band during the street masquerade. For the poorer groups who could not afford such fine musicians, a new type of percussion orchestra was developed from an African-derived instrument, the bamboo stem. The stems were cut to various lengths and struck on the ground to produce "deep grunting sounds" of different pitches (Hill 1972: 46). This became known as the tambour-bamboo band and included shak-shaks, water-filled bottles of different pitches which were struck with spoons, and metal graters scraped with metal rods. This band produced plenty of sound and rhythm, but rather little melody.

In the late 1930s, bamboo bands underwent a remarkable transition when "an odd assortment of empty biscuit tins, paint cans, dustbins, and cement drums" were added to the festival music. Soon after, the steel pans were made from 40 gallon oil drums discarded by the oil refinery. They were tempered, cut to various sizes and tuned to play notes according to scale. By 1943, the steelbands were sufficiently refined not only to energize the carnival parades, but to perform on the concert stage. In 1945, the steelband was introduced into Aruba by the Trinidadians who came to work in the Island's oil industry.

## **1. Sinking the pans**

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Carnival in Aruba

The heat begins, we goin' jam and sing  
Its carnival, lots of bacchanal  
Jouvert morning we goin' grind, grind, grind  
Break a day, carnival all the way.

I feel so crazy, don't look for me  
I too busy, busy  
It's carnival, we don't give a damn  
Drums them beating, bradam, bradam [Mighty Heads].

The official start of Aruba's pre-Lenten carnival is the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month (the Fool's magic hour). Festivities, however, do not begin until around January 6th with jumps-ups and Old Mask parades to "heat up" the people for the season. The first of these events is the Torch Parade, known in Dutch as *fakkeloptocht*. It takes place on the first Saturday evening after New Year. Masqueraders bearing flaming torches "jam" and "wine" through the streets of Oranjestad to last year's favorite roadmarch music. Revelers wear Old Mask costumes which relate to creatures of the night – skeletons, ghosts, or zombies. Some wear last year's costume while others create new masquerades.

The Torch Parade is the start of several weeks of jump-ups, parades, and various entertainments that take place all over the Island. Early competitive events include Prince and Pancho (jester) elections, followed by child, teen and adult carnival Queen elections. These take place in most neighborhoods, in social and sport clubs, schools at all levels, in hotels, private businesses, and even homes for the elderly. The Island's hotly fought tumba, roadmarch and calypso music competitions are held in sports arenas and other public spaces. In the hotels there are steelband and carnival shows, costume balls, and parties. Beer flows everywhere to liberate the senses as the Island enters a season of glorious celebration and unrestrained festivity.

In homes around the Island, domestic space turns to carnival space as costumes and roadpieces go into production.<sup>xlvi</sup> Lights burn throughout the night as people work hard to complete the material images that have been in their minds for months. As with carnivals everywhere, the participants will spend small fortunes on their costumes and despite fund-raising events, some will always incur serious social and financial debts. But as the sun slowly rises on the morning of the grand parade such concerns are far from their minds. Most *carnavalistas* are still hard at work, their arms aching from welding and hammering, their fingers burning from gluing or sewing thousands of sequins onto hundreds of yards of plush velvet and shimmering fabric. A few retire to bed to steal an hour or so of much needed rest, and then it is time for the masquerader to enter the costume and step into the street. To become the "living embodiment of his or her imagination" (Errol Hill 1972:84).

The players make their way to the start of the parade route and assemble in groups ranging from less than twenty to over four hundred. Musical road bands are hired to accompany each group; live music is needed to lift the spirits and fortify the dancers against their aching shoulders and painful feet. The carnival parade winds through the streets while the sun glints and flashes over a sea of sparkling sequins and colorful feathers. Carnival is a time to affirm a sense of community, and enthusiastic spectators

applaud the imaginative, innovative, and humorous masquerades. Revelers stroll up and down the street socializing with other spectators while others take it easy under the hot sun lounging in comfortable deck chairs with umbrellas. Music fills the air from radios and boom boxes, brassbands and musical bands, steelband and disco vans. Women wander up and down the parade route selling straw hats from the pile stacked precariously high upon their heads. Whole families stand on top of their vehicles, invariably well stocked with food and drink, to obtain a better view. The lucky few who managed to win a *kave*<sup>xlvii</sup> party energetically inside their carnival trailers. These are often creatively decorated with advertisements, popular slogans, or biting socio-political satire.

Although the grand parade takes three hours to pass, the masqueraders themselves are dancing through the streets for eight hours from start to finish in the heat of the burning Caribbean sun. The musical bands ride on trucks that rudely belch noise and smoke. They carry enormous speakers to amplify the group's chosen repertoire of favorite roadmarch songs. Food vans follow behind the masqueraders to supply them with beer and soft drinks, hot dogs and *pastechis* (savory pastries) for added energy. On either side, the spectators jump-up enthusiastically as their favorite music bands pass. Children seeking carnival trophies reach out to pluck feathers from the passing costumed groups. Every hundred yards or so, attendants relieve players of their heavy body pieces. But as they approach the waiting television crews at the bend of the road, again they take up their shimmering burdens and shine like Gods from Mount Olympus. Despite fatigue, heat, and discomfort the desire to project an ideal carnival performance and stand out above the rest, encourages participants to give their all.

As the long day winds down and the cool of the evening brings respite from the heat, the exhausted groups arrive at the stadium. The pilgrimage is over. Family and friends are waiting to cheer, congratulate, and comfort. For the participants, for the revelers, and for all the Aruban people, carnival is the sweetest glue of social life.

## 1. Watching the watchers

### The history of Aruba's carnival

The longest phase of my fieldwork on Aruba was spent on the collection of written documentation and oral accounts of the origins and development of the carnival. Because so little has been written on the history and development of the festival, this dissertation presents the first comprehensive description of the structure and forms of the Aruba carnival. It also explores the implicit and explicit meanings generated by the various individual carnival events.

There are several contestable oral versions of the beginnings of the carnival. Through a comparison of this anecdotal data with available documents, old film footage, and photographs, it has been possible to identify the beginning of the carnival and four subsequent overlapping eras or spheres of carnival activity. Although several ethnic groups have contributed to the festival in different ways, the carnival has been shaped mainly by two population groups, the native Aruban elite, and the English-speaking Afro-Caribbeans who arrived on Aruba in the 1940s. The first era, or sphere, of carnival festivity can be documented for the period from 1921 to 1954. From numerous interviews it is clear that there were sporadic carnival festivities on the Island from at least 1921. In addition to carnival, festivities comprised private elite European-style balls, including debutante balls, and costumed parties to celebrate seasonal festivities such as Halloween, Christmas, and New Year. In San Nicolas, the American refinery workers introduced their own Euro-American style seasonal festivities.<sup>xlviii</sup>

The elite native Aruban Tivoli Club once hosted debutante balls for the daughters of Aruba's most prominent families. These coming out parties were held to introduce the young ladies to eligible bachelors. The Tivoli and other social clubs, also frequently held European-style fancy dress balls in the 1920s through 1950s. During the early Tivoli carnival members wore ludic costumes (mis)representing Pierrots, Arabs, ballet dancers, conquistadors, pirates, matadors, African kings, old hags, Mexicans, Mariachis, cowboys and Indians, and Chinese Mandarins. The masqueraders rode through the streets on floats fashioned into flower gardens, giant swans, and the like.

To this day, the Tivoli holds a traditional costume ball during carnival week called *Mamaracho* night.<sup>xlix</sup> The *Mamaracho* is a night of fun, mumming, and masquerade that gets people into the carnival mood. As always with the Tivoli, everything is presented with style, extravagance, and high standards. The central focus of the evening are the mumming groups comprising several groups of ten to twelve people who create and perform short comic skits which draw upon slapstick, gossip, and social and political satire. The groups are competitive and practice for several weeks. No expense or effort is spared and costumes, props, and musical accompaniment are of the highest quality. At ten p.m. precisely, the first group makes its entrance, formally announced by a Master of Ceremonies. The other groups arrive throughout the evening and perform to the merriment and applause of the club members. Most of the mummers are masked, and some remain so for the rest of the night to keep others from knowing who they are.

In the early days, the Tivoli held a formal elite ball called the *Luhoso* or *Lux* Ball. It was held on the eve of the grand carnival parade in Oranjestad, the day after *Mamaracho* Night. The tradition of the *Luhoso* ball ceased many years ago because members found themselves too exhausted to participate in the grand parade. This ball is worth noting for its similarity to its European roots (Hill 1972). It was such an elegant affair that the public used to stand outside the club just to watch the guests as they arrived. Costumes were sumptuous. Magnificent gowns mimicking those from the reign of Queen Isabella of Spain and Elizabethan England, with large lace ruffs, and skirts covered with hand embroidery, sequins, and mock-pearls. Throughout the night guests danced and flirted behind their masks and played jokes upon one another in the tradition

of the French and New Orleans elite carnival balls of the nineteenth century (Kinser 1990, Orloff 1981, Hill 1972). Although only members and their guests were invited, an intruder or two always lurked behind a disguise. On this night also, the Tivoli Carnival Queen-elect was crowned by no less than the Dutch Governor or else the Commander of the Dutch Marines.

The second era or sphere of festival activity took place between 1945 and 1954 in the southern oil town of San Nicolas.<sup>i</sup> Expanding steadily through the 1930s and 40s, the refinery recruited workers from the English-speaking Windward Islands of Trinidad, Jamaica, and from British Guyana. Smaller numbers of workers came from Barbados, Antigua, St Kitts, St Vincent, and Grenada. By 1948, 9,442 British subjects had arrived in Aruba, the largest foreign group by far out of an Island population of 48,000. During this period, interest in the Trinidad carnival was increasing. Mas bands were growing larger with themes from history, Hollywood films, and military and sailor masquerades (Hill 1972). It was a period of enormous creativity, and of Trinidadian migrations to other regions. It was these immigrants that transplanted their style of carnival into Aruba in the 1940s. The first mas men, among others, were Calvin Assang, Elric Crichlow, Robert Murray, William "Woody" Woodley, Adolpho "Chippy" Richardson, and "Shakey" and "Tremble" Welch..

A two-page account, "Carnival on Aruba" (Figaroa et al n.d.) from the National Library, reports that the carnival dates back to 1939 when the Trinidadians established it in San Nicolas. The document notes that "around Christmas time in 1944, a group of Trinidadians, with their own band, paraded outside in the neighborhood of Lago Heights in San Nicolas." The account also states that Tivoli, an elite native Aruban social club, held carnival festivities in February of 1944.<sup>ii</sup> Club members relate that one of their group, Ada Arends, had shortly before paid a visit to Holland and observed a carnival. On her return, she suggested the carnival theme for a new clubhouse fundraiser.

The earliest photographic evidence of a public pre-Lenten carnival parade in public is from March 3rd, 1946.<sup>iii</sup> This depicts Tivoli club members parading in trucks along Hendrikstraat, Oranjestad, and identify their carnival queen for that year as Edith Arends. Later that same year, in San Nicolas, the Afro-Caribbeans celebrated Queen Wilhelmina's birthday "Trinidad-style" at the Lago Heights Club, while Oranjestad held a Dutch-style parade with marching bands, decorated floats, athletic exhibitions, and kite flying. A large San Nicolas group of "Egyptian Slaves" led by the Trinidadian Robert Murray, came from San Nicolas to parade in Oranjestad and won first prize for best carnival group.<sup>iiii</sup> In February of 1947, San Nicolas residents celebrated Princess Beatrix's birthday with parades led by the American Legion.<sup>liv</sup> Since this was also carnival season, Calvin Assang and a group of Trinidadians obtained permission to hold a public carnival parade. Mas leader, Assang, remembers this outing well:

We had a little group that we confined to San Nicolas. That was for the carnival that we celebrate around just before Lent. It wasn't something elaborate, it was just to keep up the tradition of carnival that we knew. A lot of elderly people helped sew the costumes, and we passed in the streets in front of their houses so they could see their work. The costume was "Arab Sheiks." They were cheap, but colorful - yellow, black, red -- and each Arab had a sword. To us we were just duplicating a group very common in the Trinidad carnival [Calvin Assang].

The Falcon Club of San Nicolas held a carnival party featuring the "Invaders" steel band in February 1948. Later that year, in August, they again held a carnival. From this, Calvin Assang took his carnival group "King Ramos and his Followers" to participate in a parade in Oranjestad honoring the coronation of Queen Juliana. They won first prize.<sup>lv</sup> In

1949 the Tivoli Club again paraded in the streets of Oranjestad and chose a carnival Queen.<sup>lvi</sup> By 1951 regional carnival Queen elections were being held all over the Island, by all groups, in clubs and barrio elections.<sup>lvii</sup>

The third era of the Aruban carnival began at the end of 1954 when the native Aruban and English groups joined to organize an Island-wide carnival. Gustavo A. Oduber, DDS, a representative of the Aruba Tivoli Club began the drive towards the realization of a public carnival under a central carnival committee with the following statement in a letter written on November 10, 1954:

Carnival 1955! That is our immediate goal! Allow us to inform you of a wonderful plan, in a few words: Forming a committee to further carnival celebrations at our individual clubs and possibly throughout Aruba.

This began a movement which was to endure and grow in stature over forty years, resulting in one of the most popular carnivals in the Caribbean. Her costume designers won more prizes than any other Caribbean country at the annual International Carnival Costume festival. At the end of 1954, three meetings were initiated by Eric Arends of the Tivoli. During these events, representatives of several other social clubs and associations agreed to coordinate their efforts towards a single grand carnival parade in Oranjestad. They brought together the diverse elements of the carnival complex: steelbands, floats, and costumed mas players. At the first meeting on November 23rd, a temporary Aruba carnival committee was formed, chaired by Gustavo A. Oduber of the Tivoli Club.<sup>lviii</sup>

A second meeting was held at the Tivoli on December 7th, at which representatives of additional clubs were present.<sup>lix</sup> The minutes of this meeting reveal that the first priority of the committee was to organize the next year's parade. Mr. de Windt, of the Excelsior Brass Band, stated that some clubs in San Nicolas already had convened a committee for the same purpose. Mr. Brunings of the Surinam Club suggested the establishment of a central meeting place where all participating clubs could gather and form one big parade. Mr. N. E. Henriquez of the Rotary Club stated that his club was not interested in participating and asked to be replaced as secretary. Mr. Tjie A. Loi of the Rio Club informed the committee that the French Caribbeans living in Oranjestad were interested in carnival and that he would invite them to participate. A third meeting was held at the Commandeursbaai Club on December 21st, 1954.

In February of 1955, the Central Carnival Committee of Aruba (CCCA) organized the first coordinated public carnival on Aruba. The role of CCCA was to manage the logistics of the celebrations, and to approach local businesses to donate prizes.<sup>lx</sup> An active supporter who did much to help realize the Island's first public carnival was Aruba's acting Lieutenant Governor, Eric Arends. He was also a member of the carnival committee. Cappy Lacle (also Aruba's first Prince of Carnival), was elected President of the CCCA in 1956, 1958, and 1959. In 1955, out of 120 contestants Island-wide, the first official carnival Queen, Eveline Croes of the Tivoli, was crowned in San Nicolas. In 1956 the Queen elections (finals) were moved to Oranjestad for all subsequent years. Although carnival activities variously occurred around Christmas time or the Dutch Queen's coronation (April) and birthdays (August), after 1949 the carnival was allotted to its present pre-Lenten season position. In 1957 the custom of having two organized grand parades began, the first in San Nicolas and the second in the capital Oranjestad.

In 1964 calypso and roadmarch music became a part of the carnival season when the calypso competitions and the titles of Calypsonian and Roadmarch King or Queen were introduced. Calypsos and roadmarches written and composed for each year's carnival are entered into competition, and the winning compositions are played

throughout the season.<sup>lxi</sup> In 1966 the present carnival committee was formed - Stitching Arubaanse Carnival (SAC). The success of the Aruba carnival has always been dependent not only on the carnival committee, but also on patronage from local merchants, private social clubs, the services provided by government (the policing of parades and the public works department for erecting road barriers and street cleaning). But the role of the Tivoli social club was clearly central to the success of the Aruba carnival in the early years. The Club's pride in its achievements is evidenced in a 1994 carnival program:

40 years ago carnival was celebrated for the first in Aruba at the Tivoli Club and as such our club is proud to be the place of birth of carnival in Aruba ... In Tivoli carnival blood runs in the veins of the youngsters but certainly also in those who over 40 years ago initiated carnival in Aruba [Tivoli Club].

Leadership by one or a few persons has proved crucial to the continuing prosperity of festive societies. Initially, the carnival most certainly prospered in Aruba largely because of the leadership role taken by the Tivoli Club. This fits with Sam Kinser's astute remark:

How strange it seems to prepare a festival whose essence is excess with such rote strictness... The committee system functions in rapport with habits of obedience to leadership and with selective admission to membership to insure the regular realization of the societies goals, which indeed have more to do with mutual social recognition than with the unbuttoned pleasure-seeking commonly associated with carnival (Kinser 1990:94).

Each year, the club elected (and still does) its own Tivoli Queen, Mrs. Carnaval (so honored for her work in the club), and the Joker. The children are represented by Joyita (little jewel) and Jokerito (little Joker). The first Tivoli Queen, Bebe Lacle, was crowned in 1944. The twelfth Queen, Eveline Croes, entered the first Island-wide carnival Queen competition in which several district and club queens participated, and was elected as Aruba's first Carnival Queen. The Tivoli Queen candidates won the coveted carnival Queen title five times until the club formally withdrew from the festivities around 1981. However, in 1992, Tivoli Queen candidate, Monica Saladin, won the contest and once again the title came back to the Tivoli, equaling the Caribe Club who also found success with their candidates in six different years. In 1997 Tivoli again won the crown with their Queen, Cathy Arends.

The third era of the Aruba carnival came to a close with the automation of the refinery and the dismissal of surplus workers in the 1950s.<sup>lxii</sup> This decline robbed the San Nicolas carnival of its most important and committed mas players, and consequently, any further direct Trinidadian influence. After the departure of many British West Indians, the control over the development of the carnival passed firmly in the hands of the native Aruban middle class. However, the carnival still embodies the distinct cultural styles of both the Trinidadians and the native Arubans, a dichotomy revealed through the performance of music, events, and languages that counter-oppose one another. For example, the calypso and tumba, Jouvert Morning and Cocoyoco Jam, and the use of English and Papiamentu.

The most important factor in the development of the carnival today is the shaping role played by native cultural identity. This introduces a powerful subtext to the festival in the form of a struggle over its future. The kinship structures of native Arubans have made possible the strong social and economic networks which have been necessary for the efficient management and financial support of the carnival. However, under their

patronage the carnival has become a largely spectator event. Many Arubans have been forced out of the parades by bigger and more luxurious body and roadpieces which have developed as a result of competitiveness between carnavalistas. As a result, participation for the majority is now too costly, and spontaneous participation has all but disappeared from the festival.

The carnival committee encourages broader participation by sponsoring mass events in sports stadiums and entertainments centers. These also generate income for SAC so that they may provide roadbands for public jump-ups, and so on. Enterprising individuals sell food and drinks at the main events, and retailers make money on the sale of costume materials and from carnival paraphernalia such as tee-shirts, music and video tapes. The carnavalistas themselves, however, make major investments in time and money they will never recoup. As a consequence, many players are only able to participate once in every two or three years. In this sense, Aruba is becoming less of a public carnival, and more of an elite middle-class spree. But anyone can jump, wail, and wine, and watch the show in the streets for free. All can eat, drink, and dance to the music paid for by others. Many Arubans living abroad travel back home annually to celebrate their carnival which is a time of self-realization and cultural renewal.

The range of events that take place during carnival varies from year to year, with new ones being added which may or may not become a permanent part of the celebrations (Jeep Parade, Costumed Roller Blades Parade, Horse Parade, for example). But of the more than fifty contests and entertainments, there are several core events take place each carnival season: costumed street parades, jump-ups in all barrios; grand all-comers carnival parades in Oranjestad and San Nicolas; the Noord children's parade; and the grand children's carnival parades of Oranjestad and San Nicolas.<sup>lxiii</sup> The International Carnival Costume Festival takes place in Oranjestad with several regional carnivals participating, for example, Aruba, Brazil, Jamaica, Santo Domingo, St. Maarten, Tenerife, and Trinidad. There are also Old Mask parades in the major towns including Noord, San Nicolas, Santa Cruz, and Savaneta, but these appear not to differ from other jump-ups. Jouvert Morning (also known as the Pajama Parade) takes place in San Nicolas, with its native northern counterpart, the Cocoyoco "Rooster" Jam, in Noord. The Caiso or Calypso Festival and competition takes place in San Nicolas, as do the roadmarch and Calypso King and Queen competitions, and the Jubu Happening where the Island's most popular musicians perform and are honored by the San Nicolas community with the title of "*e cantante di pueblo*" (the people's singer). The tumba festival is held in Oranjestad and elects the Island's tumba King or Queen. The Brassband Jamboree is also held in Oranjestad. The Steelband competitions used to take place in San Nicolas but they have not been held since the 1980s. The transfer of command by the Prime Minister of Aruba to the Prince of Carnival takes place at government house in Oranjestad. The Prince's motorized parade circles the entire Island, passing through its main towns. Queen competitions occur in all barrios, as do Prince and Pancho competitions.

The Tivoli Children's Balloon Parade and Lighting Parade wind through the center of Oranjestad. The Old Mask Parade and Burning of Momito (little Momo) takes place in San Nicolas on Monday after the Grand Parade, while the Burning of Momo takes place on Shrove Tuesday. As the popularity of carnival grows, events and entertainments are added to expand the variety and sphere of the festivities.

### **Encounter in the lense**

### Principal carnival characters

The carnival season in Aruba revolves around a set of primary actors or characters: the King or Spirit of Carnival *Momo*; his Queen of Carnival, her Prince of Carnival and his jester or Fool, Pancho. Also important, and responsible for the music that rouses the spirit of carnival from his sleep, are the kings and queens of calypso, tumba, and roadmarch.

The central figure of the carnival is the Carnival Queen. Her role is to preside over the season and lead all the street parades. She is also required to make public appearances that promote the carnival, and to represent Aruba at home and abroad during the year of her reign. The format of the elections are based on the early Tivoli club celebrations, and on those of New Orleans Mardi Gras.<sup>lxiv</sup> SAC organizes the district carnival Queen elections while social and sport clubs arrange their own. Adult Queen candidates must be at least 17 years old, youth queens 13 years old, and child queens at least 8 years old. Large amounts of money are invested in these elections and districts and clubs are particularly competitive. They try to outdo each other in costume, presentations, and in the show of community support. Although these Queen contests are rather formulaic, there are a few small variations. For example, Coastal (the company that recently re-opened the oil refinery in San Nicolas) includes a bathing costume competition and an intelligence test as part of their competition which is run along the lines of a Miss World contest. Queen speeches given at the final competition level, are repeated in a second or third language – most commonly Papiamentu followed by English and occasionally Spanish. Contestants are cognizant that they are speaking to an international audience (the elections are broadcast overseas) and that the majority of the tourists in the stadium are North American followed by Spanish-speaking visitors. Most speeches contain the following sentiments:

Everyone unite as one, forget your problems, join in celebrating. It is a fantasy, be happy. Thank you for your support my friends, and think of your education and work hard to make our Island better and more beautiful.

According to the rules stipulated by SAC only an established organization with a “proper constitution” may sponsor a Queen candidate. The Tivoli elects their Queen with money votes that can total between two and three thousand dollars. As a candidate to the national elections she may use this money towards the cost of her carnival costume, evening gown, her carnival float, and her support structure. Support consists of the hire of a brassband and the purchase of self-advertising posters, sirens and other noisemakers, balloons, tee shirts, and dresses for her stage-show dancers who are part of her theatrical self-presentation to the judges.

The King or Spirit of Carnival is called *Momo* (Pp. *popchi disfrasa*: a disguised doll) from the Greek god of censure and mockery, Momus or Momos. The model for Momo comes from Spain's *Rey Momo*. The Aruban Momo is represented by a gaudily-dressed effigy with a painted mustached face, a glittering rag-a-tag assortment of clothing, and a golden crown upon his large head. To mark the end of his reign over the season of excess and indulgence Momo is symbolically put to death. This is called the burning of Momo, or in traditional European phraseology, “burying the carnival.” The actual custom of putting kings to death at the end of a set term has prevailed throughout history and in many lands, and has long been a central feature of carnivals. The burlesque death during carnival is executed by burning, drowning, stoning, or decapitation.

The custom of electing a royal personage to preside over a season of festivity is

old. In England, as the Lord of Misrule he reigned for up to three months from Allhallows Even until Candlemas. In Scotland the Abbot of Unreason led the revels of the merry season from the halls of colleges to the mansions of the nobles and the royal palace. The King of the Bean prevailed in many parts of England, France, Belgium, and Germany. In some places, each family would elect its own King or Queen, or both. The election was decided by different methods, for example, by picking a bean from a hat, or by lot, or else by baking a large cake on the eve of the festival. There are two beans inside, a black bean for a King and a white bean for a Queen. When the cake was divided amongst the family, whomsoever received the beans would reign over the celebrations.

In France, the Pope of Fools, or Abbot of Folly, presided over the season known as the Feast of Fools. The festivities included grotesque and impious masquerades, merry orgies, and rude singing all intended to ridicule the church and its solemn rituals. At the height of the fun priests wore hideous masks, or dressed as women, while laymen wore the habits of monks and nuns. The altar was transformed into a tavern where the clergy ate sausages and played dice and cards. After playing such pranks they rode about the town exchanging scurrilities with the crowds of laughing and jeering spectators.

In some parts of Italy a huge effigy of the King of carnival was paraded through the streets. The King was burned on a pile of wood in the middle of the public square while the villagers danced and sang around the pyre. Sometimes the deceased figure of carnival is personified by a living man who lies in a coffin attended by another who acts the priest and dispenses holy water from a bath tub. On Malta, the death of the carnival used to be mourned by women on the last day of the festival. Dressed in black they carried the effigy of carnival stuffed with straw and decked with leaves and oranges. In parts of France, an effigy called Caramantran is drawn on a litter, accompanied by intoxicated maskers in grotesque costume. After a mock trial he is sentenced to death, set against a wall and symbolically killed under a shower of stones (Frazer 1959). The beginning of Lent in England once featured a figure made of straw called Jack o' Lent. He was drawn through the streets amid much laughter, then either burnt or thrown down a chimney. In Germany the Fool of carnival was carried around on a bier, preceded by a man dressed in white and followed by the devil dressed in black. After the procession the Fool was buried under straw and dung (Frazer 1959:255). On Aruba, Momo is paraded through the streets and taken to a public stadium. There at midnight, he is tied to a tall pole and set alight by the Queen and her royal court. As the flames envelop him, Momo (who has been stuffed with fire crackers), explodes violently, sending a shower of sparks into the sky.

Aruba's Prince of Carnival is modeled on the Carnival Prince from the south of Holland. The costume he wears is of a similar style and cut. The role of the Prince is to present his Queen to the people on her election, and to accompany her wherever she appears. The reign of the royal court officially begins when the keys to the Island are relinquished by the Prime Minister and handed to the Prince of carnival. This takes place at a public ceremony in front of the government building. Here the Prince reads a proclamation (also televised) which outlines the new rules by which his citizens will be governed for the festival season. The Prince takes this opportunity to vent the Aruban peoples' opinions on a range of subjects, but with some limits of propriety. Government officials and their deeds are rudely lampooned to the delight of the gathered citizenry.

Pancho is the assistant to the Prince. His role is to tell jokes and to accompany and assist the Prince in all his royal functions. The sobriquets that the Prince and his Fool devise for themselves derive from common phrases which they split and combine in playful ways. For example, Prince Fantasy and Pancho Island; Prince Bud and Pancho

Weiser; Prince Dollar and Pancho Rent-a-Car; Prince Gordo (fat) and Pancho Flaco (skinny); Prince Lenga (tell) and Pancho Largo (tale). The name "Pancho" was adopted from Aruba's first carnival Fool, M. Neme, who chose to use his nick name as part of his sobriquet, "Pancho Morris." The character of Pancho originates from the Fool of the European festivals of old. The Fool also provides the historic basis for the Tivoli's "Joker." The Fool is a trickster, and in Europe during the middle ages he was known as "Harlequin," the King of a diabolical army of dead souls who terrified and delighted carnival crowds. As a descendant of an ancient god the Fool was regarded with superstition and fear. He held sway over nature and had links to other worlds and dimensions. He is at once quick and clumsy, sharp witted and stupid, and he plays the dual role of devil and Fool. Always the prankster, the Fool transforms the meaningful into nonsense, and vice versa. He dresses in a three-colored costume, red, green, and yellow.

According to ancient legend, the Fool was born under the same horoscope as the King who was his equal. The fool's magic number, eleven, symbolized that equality, two ones side by side. In the medieval court he enjoyed the unique privilege of being allowed to tell the King things that no one else would dare to. He was amusing, and annoying, and would often speak in verse. He would ridicule the King's court by exposing their intrigues and hypocrisies, making them laugh and blush (Frazer 1959). Prince and Pancho competitions in Aruba play off the legendary qualities of the fools of old. The pair perform a comedy routine in which they must demonstrate their mastery over buffoonery and quick wittedness -- essential qualities for holding such important positions in the royal court of carnival. Scoring is based on originality, comedy, educational content, personality, and audience popularity. Candidates that use bad or vulgar language will be disqualified, and occasionally they are.

The Emcee, or master of ceremonies, is chosen for his or her knowledge of local issues and popularity within all communities. Roger Abrahams (1983) identifies the Emcee as a verbal trickster, or in West Indian celebrations, as a "man o' words." Like the Calypsonian he gets away with saying what others cannot say without fear of retribution. The Caribbean Emcee has a flexible style that covers the whole creole continuum ranges from North American disc jockey, to the banter of Antiguan villages. His job is to distract and entertain the audience while technicians struggle with technical difficulties. He both mocks and celebrates the performances, and cracks jokes that predominate with sexual innuendoes and double entendres which elicit enthusiastic responses from the crowd (Treitler 1990:43). The popular Emcees currently active in Aruba are Reuben "Scorpio" Garcia, and Juby Naar. Both have an intimate knowledge of social and political life on Aruba, and both are welcome through many doors. Because of the smallness of Aruban society, however, they do not take too many liberties with the goodwill of the community. In this way, they remain popular and effective in their roles. Scorpio even has a popular radio program that runs throughout the carnival season called *Aki Aya* (Here and There). Through his daily broadcasts he keeps everyone informed and up to date on the myriad of events that are taking place all over the Island. He conducts on-air interviews with popular musicians, and would-be queens, and of course, dispenses all the latest carnival gossip with great relish and wit.

### Masquerades in Aruba: Past and present

The central features of Caribbean carnivals such as steelbands and drumming, parading in costumes, Queen elections, and music competitions have strengthened over the years in Aruba while undergoing subtle transformations. Some elements that were

introduced from Trinidad and other territories did not survive past the early parades of the 1950s. These are the Moco Jumbies, Jab-Jabs, stickfighters, and the Burroquite and Pajaro Guarandol masquerades from Venezuela. Identification of these early masks has been through old photographs, films, written descriptions, and by anecdotal accounts. Although many of these themes and masks have disappeared, or been secularized through their recontextualization and re-interpretation, this process reflects the changing demography of the Island throughout the fifty years of the festival, and the subsequent Arubanization of carnival through the introduction of new themes.

The spectacular stilt dancers, or Moco Jumbies, are of West African origin and are found in several Island carnivals and other celebrations, most notably in St. Vincent and Trinidad. The origin of the term is most likely the Manding phrase "Mumbo Jumbo" from West Africa.<sup>lxv</sup> In Trinidad, only a few stilt dancers remain but the tradition is strong in other parts of the Caribbean (Nunley 1988:92). San Nicolas mas players of Guyanese, Vincentian and Trinidadian background recall seeing the Moco Jumbie character a few times in the San Nicolas carnival before the 1960s. Eye-witness accounts are vivid. One San Nicolas resident recalls as a young boy, climbing up onto a second-floor balcony to get a better view of the tall apparition (10 to 15 feet high), and reaching out to give the masker some coins:

We called them *bois-bois*, that's French patois for Moco Jumbie. They stood on stilts and wore dresses. They carried huge whips to chase people around about who could trip him. We had a two story building with a gallery and rail. He used to stand on his stilts about equal to us and stretch out his hand and accept silver, six pence or six cents. He could step over this wall which was about seven feet or eight feet high. He wore a lot of bracelets, a lot of powder on his face, and a colorful head tie. They played local drums we called "bom bom," a big bass drum; a "rollin' pan," which has a piece of twine, and then we had a "time pan," and a "shak shak." They always lead out with a whistle and a little triangle they hit with a stick and a jaw bone from a donkey. They had wire masks, painted with a face, and danced on one leg [Carlos de Freitas].

The first Jab-Jab, or devil mas, was organized during the 1906 Trinidad carnival, and it also appeared in the early Aruban carnivals. Traditional Jab-Jabs wore an ancient costume of satin knickers, satin shirt with points of cloth around the waist from which are suspended bells. They also wore a hood with stuffed cloth horns, and they cracked rope whips at the spectators (Crowley 1956:214). Devils are still frequent participants in Aruba's carnival but are clearly associated with the modern day Halloween variety rather than with its historic relative in Trinidad. Adolpho "Chippy" Richardson, one of the original mas players in the Aruba carnival has clear recollections of stickfighting in San Nicolas:

They used to do stickfighting in village of San Nicolas. Fellows from Grenada, Carriacou, St. Vincent, Trinidad, and St Lucia would get together around the carnival season to fight on different nights. They would dig a hole, that is for the blood. Stick fighting was a cruel something you know, fellows would get their head bust open. When one group of fellows meets another group, it's a war. They want to see whose leader is better man. There was music, they beat pans and boxes, they danced around, they sang. Then one fellow will throw his stick in the pit to open the challenge, and whosoever want to come, will come and fight. Each man would pick up his stick and then they would start battle. It's a challenge of skills -- two men at a time, one battle at a time. The battle ends

when someone draw blood and drains it in the pit. Broken jaw, bust head. You can lose your life. The Government stopped it and was finished before the 1960s. They said if you drew blood then you had to pay a fine [Chippy Richardson].

His account is remarkably close to the stickfighting recorded for Trinidad of the last century: "The duels are fought with hard wooden sticks about five feet long. The two combatants challenge each other by singing scornful verses about the opponent and his family. Then they dance and try to hit each other with their sticks, or *bois*, while the spectators and drummers take over the music. The fight ends when one of the combatants is bleeding" (Sealey and Malm 1982:18). The origins of stickfighting in the Caribbean can be traced back to the highly ritualized stick-fights of Africa, and to the cudgel or quarter staff fighting of England.

In Trinidad, stickfighting developed among the ex-slaves and laboring classes of Port of Spain who lived in barrack settlements on the perimeter of the city. The area was socially divided into yards which formed groups for self-entertainment, especially music, dancing and stick-fighting. They also organized themselves into separate carnival groups, each with its own chantwell. Because of the harsh living conditions, antagonisms built up in the community resulting in rivalry between the yards which gave themselves names such as Hell Yard. During pre-carnival rehearsals, the chantwells insulted and provoked rival bands through their carnival songs. When the yard stick-men went out into the streets, they sought out their rivals and combats ensued. The lyrics of the songs boasted of the "badness" of their own stick fighters who were characterized as outlaws or devils. This imbued carnival with the strong agonistic element still found in carnival competitions today (Alonso 1990:100-103). Each band had a mock King and Queen with a royal court of attendants, including strong body-guards of stickmen, each carrying a lighted flambeaux and a five-foot long hardwood stick. The champion, or chantwell, of each band walked ahead singing boastful songs about himself and his followers. Well into the twentieth century steelbands and mas groups openly sought battle with rival groups in which boastings and invectives were the major weapons (Abrahams 1983:xvii). Chippy Richardson remembers such battles between rival steelbands and carnivals groups in San Nicolas during the 1950s and 60s:

In 1957 we had an encounter with a band here in San Nicolas. We were playing that "Deck of Cards" band. The other band was playing "The Glory of Portia." When those Trinidad guys saw "The Deck of Cards" they really saw that we were better than them. So they declared war. There was a big fight in the Lago Sport Park. They started up with this tune, I'll never forget:

"Tell them, tell them, we don't fraid nobody,  
Oy yoy, yoy, yoy,  
Tell them, tell them, we don't fraid nobody."

And they start to joke in front of us; so Edgar Connor (of the steelband Invaders) said "no mind," and he started up:

"We young and strong, we don't fraid of soul in town,  
Who think they bad, I tell them we more than bad,  
We send in guns, by then we havin' fun,  
If you think your smart, clear the way,  
and if you think your bad, make your play. "

This was in the sport park where people had gathered after the parade. Still in costume. Well, all I can remember is that I saw steel pans flying, cause both bands got together and start a big fight. A big fight. Not set out to kill or anything, just for prestige you understand [Chippy Richardson].

Venezuelan and Colombian residents or visitors also introduced elements of their cultural festivals into Aruba's carnival. The *diversiones* (street performances of short plays by groups of masked actors) incorporate Amerindian, African, and Spanish elements, and are well known in many parts of Eastern Venezuela. According to Aruban carnavalistas, the Venezuelans incorporated at least two street performances into the carnival, the *Burroquite*, and the *Pajaro Guarandol*. The Burroquite, or donkey masquerade, was seen often in the early Aruba carnivals. The performance focused on a large paper donkey that hung around a dancer's hips and gave the illusion that he or she was riding the animal. The framework is made of wood, wire, and cardboard, covered with a bright skirt of color fabrics, and sporting a hemp tail. The dancer wears a satin shirt, and a large brimmed hat, and gallops, brays, and does all those things appropriate to the donkey. La Burriquita is accompanied by musicians playing guitar, quatros, and shac-shacs.

The *Pajaro Guarandol* is another popular Venezuelan street play found in villages during carnivals and other festivals. The play, which has appeared from time to time in Aruba's parades, features a bird-like creature, a hunter, and a witch doctor. The masquerade comprises a masked dancer hidden within a large bird costume made of wire, carton papers, and feathers (Pollak-Eltz 1983). In Aruba a similar bird is associated with the festival of *San Juan* and with the associated dance performance called the *dera gai* (to bury the rooster). This mask has appeared frequently over the years in the carnival, although a bird or rooster image may also represent Aruba's sport of cock-fighting.

The *bruho* or witch doctor is known in Aruba also. In the Venezuelan context, the bruho appears in street plays with the bird whom he resuscitates with magic incantations after it has been killed by a hunter. The masquerader is dressed in a long gown and carries curative plants and a magic rattle. In Aruba, a reference for this masquerade relates more generally to the widespread local belief in *bruha*, or witchcraft, although the costume is quite similar.

The Trinidadians and other British West Indians introduced the structure, themes and masks of carnival that were popular in Trinidad in the 1940s and 1950s. Since that time, first the British West Indians, and then increasingly the native Arubans traveled to Trinidad to observe the carnival, which takes place the day after the one in Aruba. This has strengthened their creativity, and served to reinforce the Trinidadianess of the festival. However, after forty years of innovation and change, few of the current themes with antecedents in Trinidad or elsewhere have any semantic connections to the original for native Arubans. They have been maintained for a variety of reasons, the most common being that they are in tune with local aesthetic taste, simple to replicate, the required materials are readily available, or because they are inexpensive to produce.

In Trinidad in the 1940s, the major groups comprised Folkloric characters, Old Masks, Traditional masks, Historic groups, Original groups, and the Big Bands (combat and sailor groups). These were a part of the Aruba carnival after 1954. Folkloric and Old Masks appeared at Jouvert Morning. These included characters who prefer to appear before the sun rises: the *soucouyant* or bloodsucker, *Diabliesse*, the Phantom, *Loup Garou* (werewolf), *Papa Bois*, and others. The Old Mask characters were burlesques of contemporary figures or events, local and foreign, bearing wittily contrived labels and often including a mimed action (Hill 1976:83). Other popular masks were Wild Indians,

Fancy Indians (many tribes), Mavis Clowns, Bats, Devils, the Beast, and Midnight Robbers. Each mas symbolized a specific semantic context and incorporated a characteristic dance or pantomime.

Many more masks introduced from elsewhere have survived than have disappeared for a variety of reasons. Peoples from Venezuela and Colombia continue to visit or settle on Aruba re-introducing cultural elements into the festival. Other masks were readily accepted because they were familiar, having been extant in the pre-1954 private carnival festivities of the Aruban social clubs. The themes that transplanted well and have survived in some form today are: African tribes; Indians of all kinds (legendary, fantasy, indigenous, North American); Jouvert Morning; the calypso, steelband, the big bands that depict historic themes and popular Hollywood films, sailorboys and combat groups; death and the Devil, and the ever popular gorillas, cowboys, pirates and clowns.

The Big Bands are the largest carnival groups with over 400 participants. The oldest of these are the Military and Sailor Boy bands which date back around a hundred years to Trinidad. During World War Two the United States Navy occupied a base in the Port of Spain. This inspired not only the portrayal of the modern sailor in carnival, but all manner of creative variations: wild sailors, scruffy or fancy sailors, sea police, stray sailors, firemen, stokers, drunken sailors, extraterrestrial sailors, or dead (under-the-sea) sailors (Nunley 1988:98).<sup>lxvi</sup>

Sailorboy masquerades are among the most popular carnival groups in Aruba, and are seen every year. Brass bands also frequently attire themselves in marine uniforms with mock decorations. They march in disciplined format and occasionally perform entertaining acrobatics. The basic costume is a white uniform with wide collar, neckerchief and white sailor hat. The presence of a Dutch Marine camp (with several hundred marines) in the coastal town of Savaneta has served to strengthen the group's popularity (they always enter a Dutch-style group in carnival, most often in the comic category). Because the sailor costume is inexpensive and simple to put together, it is popular. Moreover, it is easy to personalize through decorative embellishments such as fake insignia, oversized medals and shoulder pads, sequins, mirrors, beads and feathers, and gold and silver braid. Carnavalistas fashion themselves as sailors of all kinds from the lowest ranks to the high ranked captains and admirals.

Carnival groups based on military uniforms are among the oldest in Caribbean carnivals, including Aruba. The Military or Combat groups date back to 1834 Trinidad. During that time, considerable license was given to the slaves over the Christmas period. The British authorities, on the alert against any trouble, would call up the entire militia to take part in military exercises and mock battles in the streets of Port of Spain. When emancipation came in 1834, the freed slaves took the opportunity to make fun of the "authority that had been paraded before them so often in the display of military force" (Hill 1972:13-14). They used the British soldiers as a model for some of the earliest masquerades, mocking them, they strutted and staggered down the street with their uniforms amusingly awry. These bands remain a popular theme in the Trinidad carnival and are today a regular feature in Aruba's carnival. Combat groups are popular for many of the same reasons as the sailor groups (cost, accessibility and simplicity). In recent years American forces have been most frequently imitated because of their impact on the community during the Second World War.<sup>lxvii</sup> In the 1991 Aruba carnival, the Noord grand parade included a military group which took up the topic of the Gulf War sending the message "make love not war."

The Devil, death, skeletons, zombies, and the unquiet spirits of the dead always seem to surface during the carnival. Images of death have appeared in the carnivals of the old and new world since ancient times. Samuel Kinser notes that a variety of ceremonies concerned with the purification of the household and renewing the fields

around this time of year were transferred from pagan religious calendars to the date of carnival in Europe's rural area. Similarly, the ceremony of burying, burning or drowning an effigy of carnival on the Eve of Ash Wednesday also carries overtones of the idea of an old year's death or ending (Kinser 1990:245).

An 1848 description of carnival in Trinidad describes a masquerade of Death as symbolized by a masker whose body was painted black with a white skeleton. Part of a horse's vertebra was attached to his body and he carried a horse's thigh bone in his hand. The character of Death found a place in the Devil Bands of later years (Hill 1972:19). The Devil also appears in the form of Jab-Jab or Jab Molassi who symbolize the evils of plantation slavery, and the exclusion of labor from access to legitimate authority and prestige (Alonso 1990:111). On Aruba, death finds its form most commonly in the guise of skeletons, ghosts, and zombies.

Indian masquerades are widespread throughout the Caribbean and the Americas and are found in virtually every Caribbean-style carnival: including the Black Indians of New Orleans, the Fancy Indians of Trinidad (Nunley 1988), and the Fantasy Indians of Aruba. Costuming as an Indian has always been a popular disguise in carnival. It relates, in particular, to the indigenous Indian struggle in the New World where the Indian masker symbolizes both the defeat and defiance of his violent confrontation with the white colonial "civilizers" (Kinser 1990:160). In Aruba, the Indian masquerade is one of the most spectacular carnival performances.

The African masquerade is another staple of the Aruba carnival. These groups best illustrate the mix of the African and Indian aesthetics found in Caribbean festivals. The results are spectacular with exotic layered garments, expressive body painting, elaborate hairstyles, and decorated hand-held ritual staffs, decorated flags, and weapons drawn from African costuming traditions. The African presence in colonial history played a central role in the development of the carnival aesthetic, blending with the European in remarkable ways. (Bettelheim et al 1988:35). Africans in the new world carried memories of West African masquerade traditions that combined dance, music, drama, and costume in a single performance. This unique artistic sensibility was absorbed into European costumes through shells, feathers and raffia, animal horns and spirit masks, and multicolored-cloths and mirrors. Literary sources and films continue to strengthen the African masquerades in their depictions of the great Chiefdoms of Africa. In addition to spectacular costumes and floats, masqueraders add all manner of accouterments: they adorn themselves with lion or leopard skins, are crowned with magnificent feathered headdresses, they carry spears and shields and magical charms, and hang animal teeth, bones, and other potent magical forces around their necks. Molly Ahye suggests such masquerades recall an Africa in the early days of internecine warfare where combat was a frequent activity (Ahye 1978:39).

There are at least six core carnival group categories under which contestants may register to participate in the Aruban carnival, although these have varied over the years. The groups that follow the Trinidad model are the Historical, Original, Luxurious or Fantasy, and Commercial categories. The Tipico and Comico categories are locally conceived native-oriented groups and will be discussed in chapter ten. The groups give themselves titles to reflect their chosen theme for that year worded variously in English, Papiamentu or Dutch depending on the national or cultural orientation of the group (the children enter under the same categories).<sup>lxviii</sup> The large and elaborate Historical and Fantasy groups depict real or legendary events and epochs of all nations or cultures. The attraction of the Historical masquerade is twofold. First, the masker is able to temporarily adopt the persona of a famous character of fact or fiction (Crowley 1956:219). Second, it gives individuals the opportunity to display their knowledge of history and display their appreciation of the world's different ethnic groups and cultures.

Masquerade group designers conduct painstaking research in order that the participants might create and portray their characters with a suitable degree of authenticity. Inspiration is drawn from American films, biblical texts, calendars, history books, or magazines.

Although this show of scholarship is an important goal for a designer, because this is carnival, the overriding consideration is to create a stunning visual spectacle for the spectators. Mas designer and calypso singer Carlos "Lord Challenger" de Freitas, of English Caribbean descent chooses also to celebrate the Indian cultures of the Americas. His San Nicolas group "Tribes of the Americas" portrayed Indians from Northern Canada to South America. His spectacular costumes and roadpieces demonstrate the time, money and effort the Arubans invest in their carnival:

We portrayed Indians from all over the Americas, from Northern Canada right down to the tail of South America. We didn't want to bring them out in their original form, but with some fantasy lighting. We got documents, books, readings, and then we went to Mexico, to Miami, the Seminoles, to Georgia, to Ohio, through the Mid-West and all the way up to Canada. We visited all these museums and brought back books and pictures. We discussed the costumes we had to produce, trying to make them affordable for the players. But sometimes we had to scratch things out and replace them with something more simple [Carlos de Freitas].

Early themes presented by the San Nicolas groups of the 1950s and 60s included such subjects as Imperial Rome 44 BC to 96 AD; Norse Gods and Vikings; Back to Africa, Relics of Egypt and Bronze Age of the Americas. Historic group players particularly enjoy acting "rich and powerful" for a day or two, masquerading as a Pharaoh, a King or Queen, a Viking in a horned helmet, a Trojan warrior in metal breastplate and greaves, or an aristocrat in a powdered wig. Whatever the choice, the group must include an extensive hierarchy of kings, queens, high priests, priestesses, sun gods, generals, and warriors. Traditional historical costumes use embroidery and pleating, plenty of capes, panels, chasubles, cowls and hoods, crowns, long wigs, banners and flags, jewelry, daggers and breastplates (Crowley 1956:219-221), anything that shows competent research towards authenticity.

The exotic luhoso (luxury) masquerade is often the most costly group to produce in terms of time, effort, and money. Certainly, this is where we find some of the most spectacular costumes. The best are entered into the International Carnival Costume Festival where they frequently take first prize. Whereas the Historic bands tend to be large, the luxurious groups are often quite small, with a single impressive roadpiece and a few costumed attendants. The exotically feathered and sequined costumes and roadpieces are remarkable for their painstaking and detailed decoration. They are judged on the amount of work, skill, and creativity that have gone into them and for the impact they make on the spectators. Each year these fabulous costumes become more and more elaborate as the major designers compete for the coveted first prize honors.

For carnival designers entering the Luhoso category, the Indian masquerade is an opportunity to show how their creative skills are able to reach the highest standards of carnival aesthetic. It is also the most expensive masquerade to produce -- feathers, mirrors and sequins are expensive materials. For the more elaborate Fantasy or Legendary Indian themes, bodypieces can extend over six feet in all directions, while the roadpieces that surround them might reach over fourteen feet high and wide. Ostrich feathers are used with spectacular effects on costumes which are exquisitely embroidered and hand worked with thousand of sequins, rhinestones, mirrors, and

beads. Designers industriously research their costumes from books and films and are inspired by the creations of other carnival designers, especially those of Trinidad and Brazil. Cowboys, pirates, and clowns have always been a favorite disguise for costumed Halloween and carnival parties in the private clubs of the Arubans. The most common cowboy costume is similar to that of the Tennessee Cowboy with a plaid shirt, fringed waistcoat, large brimmed hat and a neckerchief. The pervasive presence and influence of Americans through the oil refinery, tourism, and business, has certainly strengthened the presence of this easy-to-assemble masquerade. The common deployment of other symbols of American culture (past themes have included Uncle Sam, Apollo spaceship, CNN news crew, Statue of Liberty) pays tribute to the positive and financially lucrative relationship the Island has enjoyed with that nation since the 1920s.

Clowns too have long appeared in Aruba's carnival festivities, they wear conical hats, multi-colored wigs, white face and red bulb noses, and red-spotted satin costumes with giant bows and ruffles around the neck. Recent carnivals have seen the increasing popularity of roller-blading clowns -- colorful but dangerously fast! Pirates are also popular in Aruba. They have appeared consistently in carnivals throughout the years. They appeared frequently at the carnival parties of the Tivoli and other Aruban social clubs from at least the 1920s, and later at the private clubs of the American oil refinery and other cultural clubs in San Nicolas. Masqueraders dress in classic pirate garb: loose Guernsey frocks or striped shirts, three-corned hats, or scarf with eye-patch and hoop earrings. Stuffed parrots, peg-legs, hand-hooks, and toy pistols and curved swords complete the ensemble for some. The Gorilla has also been a frequent visitor over the years, a hot and hairy outfit under the sun, but a great favorite with the children.

The spectacular Tivoli Lighting Parade is a major tourist attraction on the carnival calendar of events and takes place in Oranjestad one week before the grand parade. Participation in this parade is by private invitation only and takes place late at night. Influenced by Walt Disney World's light parades, the Tivoli Lighting Parade is famed for its sumptuous fairy light-covered costumes which give the parade its unique ambience. The first Lighting Parade was presented on the 60th anniversary of the Tivoli Club on February 14, 1981. It was so successful that a second lighting parade was held on January 29, 1983, and has taken place every year since. The designers experiment with different lighting effects on the floats, roadpieces and participants costumes. A variety of materials are used, including neon paint, colored lights powered by small generators or batteries, twinkling lights, colored smoke, black light, and laser light. The Tivoli Club groups also invest a good deal of time, money and effort into their costumes. It is an especially challenging event to design and produce. Designers carefully research their themes, make detailed working drawings, and often produce scaled-down prototypes for testing. The complex roadpieces begin with the fashioning of an armature mounted on a base. It is given shape with wire netting and then lined inside with hundreds of light bulbs. Foam material is used to cover the form and to provide a foundation for the application of the covering materials (sequins, metallic fabrics, feathers, and mirrors) -- anything that will catch the light. The road pieces are then mounted on wheels and connected to electric generators. The body costumes are made from reflective materials and are also covered with anything from one to five hundred light bulbs. This illumination gives the Lighting Parade a psychedelic, dream-like quality not easily forgotten. The masqueraders are hooked up to electric generators and must be careful not to trip over the wires as they dance through the dark.

Passing along the sea front of Oranjestad around midnight, the parade's approach is signaled by the thunder and roll of beating drums and the mounting excitement of the waiting spectators. The Tivoli carnivalistas emerge out of the dark, shimmering and sparkling from a thousand tiny fairy lights sewn into their costumes.

Marching brassbands trumpet shrilly through the diesel-scented warm night air, consuming spectators with pulsating soca rhythms. To jump in behind the Tivoli Lighting Parade is to understand the compelling attraction of carnival. Nothing can stop the true carnival goer from entering the parade. As we enter this other dimension, the quality of time and space changes. We are not ourselves anymore -- we are the masquerade.

The jump-up that opens the carnival season is the Torch Parade, or *fakkeloptocht*. It takes place on the first Saturday night after New Year. The parade is organized by the Tivoli Club and participation is by invitation only -- although all are free to jump-in at the tail as with all parades. The Torch Parade is an evening jump-up with costumes. Masqueraders carrying flaming torches and are accompanied by Asambeho brassbands, disco vans, and/or live musical bands playing roadmarch music. The flambeaus symbolize the heat soon to be generated by the Islanders as they warm up for the season.

The Tivoli Club hold their own children's carnival parade, the Tivoli Balloon Parade. As with the Lighting Parade, this event epitomizes the conspicuous spending which has become associated with the middle and upper class players of Aruba. The level of financial investment, artistry and craftsmanship in these masquerades is impressive. Themes comprise the childrens' favorites: Walt Disney characters, Teenage Ninja Turtles, or Pierrot Balloon Fantasy, for example, but there are always one or two floats with a strong educational theme. The parade is much shorter than those of the adults, but the children have a great time throwing candy from the floats. The smallest children tire easily in the sun, so a sleeping butterfly or bumble bee might be observed cradled peacefully inside a giant flower. Participants from this parade often also enter the Grand Childrens' Parades of Oranjestad and San Nicolas. The Balloon Parade is named for the custom of using balloons within its theme, either assembled into some human or animal form floating high above the noisy parade, or simply by being attached to everything that moves such as push chairs, floats, disco vans, tricycles, and the children themselves.

Public jump-ups are held all over the Island to "heat the people up" for the carnival season. They are essentially street parties with soca bands held on an ad-hoc basis throughout the season which add to the general feverish atmosphere of the Island. These street parties are popular with teenagers and lots of parading, preening, and flirting goes on. Carnival costumes are rarely worn by the revelers, rather, shorts, jeans, tee-shirts, sneakers, and bare midriffs are the style. The Jouvert Morning jump-up in San Nicolas is an opportunity for people to get into the carnival spirit ahead of the town's afternoon Grand Parade. Jouvert Morning began in Trinidad around 1841 when colonial British authorities reduced the carnival celebrations from three days to two after they had become unduly boisterous following manumission. Assuming that Monday began at midnight on Sunday, the ex-slaves began to usher in the carnival with a midnight procession (now Jouvert Morning) in which they carried torches with singing, drumming, and dancing (Hill 1972).

Jouvert on Aruba begins well before sunrise on Saturday while the town is still sleeping. This event is the emotional Mecca of carnival for San Nicolarians and is attended by all serious carnival revelers from other parts of the Island. In earlier years, costumes were varied and amusing. They included bits and pieces of old carnival costumes, under-wear worn as over-wear, and jokes or social commentaries displayed on costumes or hand held signs. Today, it is rare to see such elaborate ludic costuming. Most participants wear everyday clothes although some do still practice the custom of wearing pajamas, night-dresses, dressing gowns, carrying towels, and waving loofahs, with some cross-dressing to add to the fun.

The northern town of Noord also holds an early morning jump-up. The Cocoyoco

“Rooster” Jam is the most recent addition to the carnival complex of events which now number well over fifty! It is held before sunrise on the day of the Noord children’s parade which is one of the largest and most popular children’s parades on the Island. This jump-up is the native Aruban counterpart to the Trinidadian-style Jouvert Morning in San Nicolas. It is geographically more accessible to Arubans living in the northern part of the Island and gives them the opportunity to warm up their dancing feet for the day’s festivities. Noord lies close to the north-west coast of Palm Beach where the majority of the hotels are situated. Because Noord is within walking distance of the hotels, this affords tourists and visitors to the Island a chance to experience a joyful early morning jump-up with Aruban revelers.

At the beginning of the season the government rents or holds a drawing for the few coveted parking spaces along the edge of the parade route. These plots provide the best view of the parades for people who wish to bring their cars, trucks, or special carnival trailers. Owners of carnival trailers paint them with personalized designs and slogans, or advertize a sponsor’s name and product. Some use the public setting of the festival to add their own voice to the seasonal soap box by writing messages on the front of their trailers. Many of these creative trailers are so entertaining and artistic, that prizes are given to the best. All kinds of subject matter can turn up on a trailer. In a recent carnival, one piece of local scandal allegedly involving a prominent government official and a young lady (an illegal alien from the Spanish Caribbean). The gossip appeared in various forms: emblazoned on a carnival tee shirt, as the subject matter of an elaborate Mamaracho Night skit at the Tivoli club, as a decorative narrative on a carnival trailer, and finally, composed in a song by tumba composer Vicente Kelly. His song was entitled *djaka den trampa* (rat in a trap):

<i>Ta ken e ta, ta ken e ta?</i>	Who is he, who is he?
<i>Ta ken e djaka grandi ey ta?</i>	Who is that big, big rat?
<i>Nos tur ke sa ta ken e ta</i>	Everybody knows who he is
<i>Nos di Politico e ta</i>	They say he is a politician
<i>Nan di ta un gay pelon e ta</i>	They say he is a bald guy
<i>of ta un gay cu barba et ta</i>	Or that this guy has a beard
<i>Nan di ta un rey di tumba e ta</i>	They say he is a tumba king.
 <i>Anto e mucha ta cushna hopi bon</i>	 The lady cooks oh so well
<i>e gay ey si a come bon</i>	This guy has eaten so well
<i>awor cu ba cab'i pasa bon</i>	After he has spent such a good time
<i>awor bo ke yama imigracion</i>	Now he wants to call immigration
<i>mi shon corda tene compashon.</i>	Dear sir show some compassion
<i>Pone man na bo curason</i>	Put a hand on your heart
<i>Kita saya bisti carson</i>	Take off your dress, put on your pants
<i>of miho bo a bisti proteccion</i>	Or better use some protection
<i>Ena ki tin eleccion</i>	This year there is an election
<i>No dana bo reputacion.</i>	So don't mess up your reputation

[Excerpt from “*Djaka den Trampa*” by Vicente Kelly, 1992]

## 1. Like so many wind-up dolls

### Historicity, continuity and change

There are several older carnival motifs in Aruba's carnival that have been somewhat re-defined since their introduction in the 1950s. For example, the Trinidad-style Historical and Amerindian bands have been re-glossed with a native veneer. The Historic masquerade has been used enthusiastically to elaborate and re-present local history. For example, the recently achieved (1986) Status Aparte relationship with Holland resulted in several carnival groups bearing this theme in 1986: Status Aparte, Star of Status Aparte, Aruba Our Paradise, the Sky is the Limit, Shield and Flag, and New Aruba. After the closing of the Lago Oil refinery in 1985 group themes included: Aruba before Lago, and, Our Brilliant Future. Other groups address themes from the distant past notably the conquest of the Caribbean by Columbus, and the history of Aruba and the region. In 1992, John Flemming, an award winning carnival mas designer brought the group "500th Anniversary of the Americas" which incorporated over 450 players and historic personages such as Cristobal Colon and Queen Isabella, and replicas of the famous ships that sailed to the New World in the fifteenth century. Flemming always brings a group with great style and believes his Island carnival can compete with the best:

When we go to other places to represent Aruba, countries like Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad can't believe that we can make such beautiful things. I say we are the second in the world after Brazil, because we win the most prizes in the International Carnival Costume Festival. For me it is important that people know that the people of Aruba can do many things [John Flemming].

The Indian masquerade has also been enthusiastically adopted as a potent visual symbol of Indian identity and to the representation of the native/autochthonous self. The Indian themes most commonly portrayed are Legendary Indians, Fantasy Indians, Arawak Indians, and North American Plains Indians. Legendary Indian warriors are a common subject in the historic group category, as are the pre-Columbian Rain God, Tlaloc, and the Plumed Serpent Quetzalcoatl, both high-ranking deities in Mayan and Aztec religions. Native Aruban designer, Marcia Stamper is one of the Island's most talented and respected carnival designers. She favors historical themes for her mas groups because they impart meaning to the public in terms of Aruba's cultural history:

I like my group to represent something historical. I love our culture with its Indian history. The people know what they are seeing so we are able to affect them, make contact with our people. With my roadpiece "Goddess of the Gods" I represented seven different Gods of the Maya Indians. When the tourists ask me what my pieces represent, I must know enough to be able to explain it to them. So you need books, you've got to learn [Marcia Stamper].

Native players express their own Indian cultural heritage by masquerading as indigenous Caiquetio and Jirajara Arawaks. Here the costumes tend to be more simple. For example, every five years the Caribe Club celebrates its lustrum by entering the Oranjestad Grand Carnival Parade with their signature theme, "Original Indians." Each carnival season they select a *cacique* (big chief), a Carib Indian Prince and Princess, and a Caribe Queen. The Caribe Queen also enters the Carnival Queen of Aruba election. The players don simple clothing such as loin cloths and plain feathers and paint their bodies with ocher, red, blue, and green. Around their necks, they wear strings of beads, shells or animal teeth.

As with all carnivals, Aruba has several comic groups, small and large that come out every years. The central focus of carnival is humor for without valid laws or behaviors to parody and mock, carnival is impossible (Sebeok 1984:1-7). However, one must know what behaviors are forbidden to enjoy their transgression! In carnival part of the fun is behaving badly, letting go (exemplified by Aruba's most enduring *mas anima* [most jolly] carnival group *los laga bai* [we let go!]), and giving in to one's ego and most outrageous fantasies. Protected by the permissiveness of carnival and hidden behind a masquerade one can do what is normally frowned upon or forbidden. By violating rules of propriety through humorous street performances, players are also restating the community rules they are normally expected to obey (Eco 1984:4-5). Humor in Aruba's carnival is found in the English calypso, the Papiamentu tumba, the Prince and Pancho competitions, and the comic groups in particular.

The comico masquerades tend to be relatively small ranging from two or three players to twenty five. Turning the carnival into a vaudeville theater of the streets they encourage the release of societal tension by poking satirical fun at local society and politics and by making fun of everything and everyone, including the tourists, the department of public works, the police, politicians, and the carnival committee. They take their ideas from local gossip, international issues, and interpret topical articles from the popular press. Themes are written and performed as theatrical set pieces, whose stories are told and re-told to each new audience as the parade progresses through the streets. The larger groups build stages on wheels where they act out their absurdities using theatrical props and costumes. Interaction with the spectators is key to a successful performance in Aruba; and often individual spectators are invited to participate and play some role in the performance which makes the street audience scream with laughter.

The two most popular comico groups today are the Paralocos, and Aiky Croes and his Crazy Team. Spectators look forward to their farcical performances. But this is parochial humor so most tourists do not fully understand the joke. The groups often deliver quite serious messages through their humorous antics, such as the dangers of AIDS and drugs and too much immigration. Individual players and couples participate also. Dutch resident, Burt Kennedy, along with various partners has been entertaining carnival spectators for many years. As a physician he often brings public health issues into his performances, for example, drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, and the need for clean habits. He also comments on rising crime and morality issues, turning such serious subjects into humor. "People laugh" he says, "but more importantly -- they get the message." The government, recognizing an opportunity to educate the population, encourages his antics and even suggesting topics to him from time to time.

There is one carnival masquerade that has been consciously developed and introduced into the parades specifically to "Arubanize" the festival. The Tipico group is charged with addressing native Aruban tradition, culture, and customs. Each new carnival season brings a myriad of themes celebrating the Island's traditions. For example, *Casamento di Antanjo* (old-time marriage) and *Nos Cultura* (our culture). Themes also frequently celebrate the Aruban landscape: *Fruta di Bushi* (cactus fruit), *Fantasia di Prikichi y Troupial* (parrot and oriole fantasy), and *Nos Mundi* (our world). Groups portraying the original Caiquetio and Jirajara Arawak inhabitants of Aruba also appear from time to time in this category.

It is not uncommon for native customs and practices to attach themselves to incoming customs with similar themes and structures. Thus, because Aruba was already familiar with masquerade parties, elite balls, and street parades to celebrate the Dutch Royal family's coronations and birthdays, carnival was adopted with easy enthusiasm. The carnival today is an amalgam of local customs and practices, European festivals, and the Trinidad carnival, with elements of other carnivals thrown in, notably from

Venezuela, Brazil, Holland, and New Orleans. The European custom of celebrating carnival with a procession of costumed revelers, decorated floats, bands of musicians, masking centered on mythology, the impersonation of animals, and disguising oneself as the opposite sex, is still practiced in Aruba. The old mumming of Europe (see glossary) is also present in the parades with the comic groups like the Paralocos, and Aiky Croes's Crazy Team.

Beginning in the fifteenth century, processions of masked figures on foot or on horseback were common in European carnivals. They paraded in organized fashion around carriages with a large symbolic figures like Satan or outsized roosters (Kinser 1990:69). Crowds filled the main streets on the last four days of carnival with abundant street masking by informally organized groups. There were orchestras on foot and in carriages, and, on the last day of carnival, there was a parade with a puppet stretched out on a bier as though dead. This mannequin was the spirit of carnival on his way to a fiery demise. The custom of holding aristocratic masked balls during the carnival season was also quite common, especially in seventeenth and eighteenth century France. In Aruba, this same ball tradition is found in Tivoli's Luhoso Ball and Mamaracho Night. In fact all of the themes cited above can be found in some descendant form in Aruba's carnival with her costumed street parades, marching brassbands, and roadbands in trucks. Businesses organize and sponsor groups, and crowds fill the streets and party, while the well to do celebrate in style in hotels and private clubs. And when the carnival is at its end, revelers parade through the streets with a float carrying the effigy of Momo, the King or spirit of carnival, who is burned at the hour of midnight. There is continuity still between old and new world carnival.

Groups draw on many sources for their creations including other bands and photographs and video tapes of other carnivals. But for most designers the penalty of continuous inventiveness is exhaustion (Kinser 1990:109), and many individuals or carnival clubs will frequently skip a year or two, simply to rest from the enormous emotional and physical strength expended during the preparations, or from the need to build up new creative and financial resources. Carnival is a costly commitment, but all will say it is worth it. Even though the Island cools down immediately after the carnival is ended, for the participants, the after-glow can last for weeks.

### **1.death of carnival**

## CHAPTER NINE

### Identity and meaning in Aruba's music and song

#### Native music of Aruba

Aruba's carnival music is the calypso and the roadmarch. But these are not native to the Island. The traditional music of Aruba is tumba and dande. Latin music is especially popular and includes the tamboe, bastel, zumbi, simadan, meringue, bolero, salsa, tumba, and the Aruban Waltz. Although the original inhabitants of the Island, the Caiquetio Arawak had their own forms of music, they have had little influence on the music we hear in Aruba today. Most scholars believe that the Indians of the Caribbean originated in or around Venezuela. According to Peter Manuel (1995) their music was centered around a socio-religious ceremony call *arieto*, in which up to a thousand participants danced in concentric circles around a group of musicians. They sang mythological chants in a call-and-response pattern and played instruments such as rattles (*maracas*), gourd scrapers (*guiros*), and slit drums (*mayohuacan*). Sealey and Malm (1982) assert that the Indians sang in a rather tense kind of voice while shaking calabash rattles, some of which are still sung by the Caribs of Dominica. They are also known to have used a kind of tambourine, and turned conch shells (*calco*) into wind instruments by blowing into them like a horn (Hill 1972:43).

According to Aruban author Hubert Booi, the original Caiquetio inhabitants of Aruba retained close links with their relatives on the north and western coasts of Venezuela and performed similar "heavy" and "light" dances. Light dances for religious ceremonials, and heavy dances for internecine warfare and its related ritual ceremonies. Booi suggests they also used a flute-like wind instrument made from maize stalks, and various kinds of rattles made from calabash fruits (Booi, n.d.). Although the Amerindian heritage has played little role in post-Columbian music some of these instruments have survived and impart some tonal flavor to present-day music -- notably the maracas, conch shells, calabash rattles and scrapers. But, for the most part, it is in African rhythms and European melodies that present day Aruban music finds its roots.

Many specific features of Caribbean music can be traced directly back to Africa. The influence that the black Caribbean communities have exerted on the regions music are quite incommensurate with their size (Manuel 1995:5). African characteristics in music found throughout the Caribbean are the close relationship between melody and speech tone, spontaneous creation of rhythm and melody, many voices (polyphony), extemporization; vocal harmonizing; and complicated rhythms. West African percussive instruments also survived the middle passage, and over time variants of these instruments emerged, such as, drums, bells, xylophones, claves, clappers, rattles, scrapers, thumb pianos, hoes, hub-caps, and bamboo sticks, among others. European instruments introduced into the Caribbean include the guitar, violin, cello, double bass, accordion, trumpet, trombone, clarinet, saxophone, piano and the organ.

The Tumba is part of the generic rumba complex and an Afro-American lexicon which includes the macumba and the tambo. This music bestows a general type of secular party ambience -- collective but not religious. Over many years this music achieved the status of an independent genre, with its own style and instrumental formats for interpretation. It even developed its own instruments such as tumbadoras, or conga drums (Farel Johnson, 1990:68). The tumba is also a popular dance rhythm in Aruba and on the neighboring Islands of Curacao and Bonaire. Each Island holds a national contest and the best song from each Island competes in the ABC (Aruba, Bonaire,

Curacao) Tumba Contest, hosted by each Island in turn. On Aruba, the tumbas that are written and performed during the carnival season and the winning composition is considered the national song of Aruba for that year. The tumba (when performed as part of the carnival) is beginning to serve the same function as the calypsos, that is, as a vehicle for satire and information illustrated earlier by the song "*Djaka den Trampa*" (discussed earlier). The tumba is sung in Papiamentu and is oriented to the native Arubans whereas the calypso is sung in English and provides entertainment primarily for the English-speaking Afro-Arubans. Thus the two forms of music both complement and oppose one another. During the carnival season, the roadmarch is used for dancing in parades and jump ups, while the calypsos and tumbas are performed at musical events for listening and responding to. Both are played constantly throughout the carnival season on the local radio stations.

The African-derived *tambu* is locally referred to as a "hot belly dance." It is also the name of the single-headed drum that marks the rhythm of the music. The music is played with a tambu<sup>lxix</sup> drum, a chapi,<sup>lxx</sup> and a wicharo,<sup>lxxi</sup> and is accompanied with rhythmic hand clapping and provocative dancing. Tambu is associated more with Aruba's sister Island, Curacao, but is performed also in Aruba. It is a bittersweet music in which a four-stringed guitar, or, *cuatro*, accompanies songs in Papiamentu. The lyrics are often sung extempore and relate to community scandals and gossip and publicly admonish wrongdoers. The best singers can improvise the lyrics as well as the best Calypsonians. The songs once contained hard words and obscene language. Today the lyrics are less offensive, although their meaning remains the same. Despite being banned briefly in the last century, like the calypso, the tambu has survived.

## 1.Rite of passage

## **1. Going deaf**

## Carnival music in Aruba

Carnival music can theoretically include any music and instrument that will make people dance, especially percussive instruments of all sorts. Jocelyne Guilbault (1990) summarizes the aesthetic valued linked to Caribbean carnival music which holds that music rarely goes without singing, cannot go without dancing and that for music to be hot, it needs to be loud and intense. The popularity of the music is dependent on its ability to incite people to participate. As public entertainment, music must be spectacular, and colorful, and versatility and skillful improvisation are highly valued (Guilbault 1990:85-86).

The music that accompanied the early Tivoli Club carnival parades of the 1940s were small groups of musicians, or, *conhuntos*. The Tivoli carnavalistas rode on decorated floats together the conhuntos that played folkloric or *tipico* music such as the waltz, tumba, meringue, danza, and mazurka. The calypso was not introduced into the festival complex until the 1950s. Brought to Aruba by the Trinidadians, the calypso transplanted well. It was similar in some respects to the local music of the tumba, the tambu, and the dande, in the sense that these genres also embodied a communicative narrative structure.

The steelband was introduced from Trinidad by native Trinidadians into the oil refinery town of San Nicolas between 1945 and 1946, and incorporated into the carnival in the 1950s. Leonard Turner arrived in Aruba in 1945 to work in the Lago oil refinery in San Nicolas. In his words:

We didn't have any entertainment so we cast about for some form of amusement, and recalled the steelbands which were becoming so popular at home [Leonard Turner].

Turner recruited a group of young men and they started experimenting. They had no music, in fact, none was written for pans in those days, but they literally pounded away, crafting pans from Lago oil drums, and playing increasingly fluent renditions of the sambas, rumbas and other popular music of the day.<sup>lxxii</sup> By 1948, Turner had put together his first professional steel orchestra, the Invaders, which performed at both public and private venues. In 1950, Turner teamed up with San Nicolas resident Naldo Brown to form another steelband "Shoo-Shoo Baby and the Aruba All-Star Boys." "Shoo-Shoo" was Turner's stage name. Naldo Brown eventually took over the group and changed it's name to the Aruba All Stars. San Nicolas calypso singer Lord Cobashi sang with this band. One young pan man in the band, Edgar Connor, went on to form his own steelband in 1952, called the "Aruba Invaders." The two bands competed against each other in the first carnival steelbands competition in 1964.<sup>lxxiii</sup> Eight steelbands competed: the Merrymakers, the Devils, the Curacao Heroes, the Long Gun Boys, the Paradera Steelband, the Silver Stars, the All-stars Steelband, and Edgar Connor's the Aruba Invaders. The Invaders won with their rendition of the music from the "Exodus." By the 1960s, a proliferation of steelbands were providing music for Aruba's carnival parades, and continued to do so for thirty years.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

The late renowned pan man Edgar Connor stayed close to the roots of the classic steelband, making his own pans to the highest quality. Although he trained a generation of pan men on Aruba, his own steelband remained the finest. Although the steelband has all but disappeared from the carnival parades due to lack of institutional support and appreciation, Connor's Invaders participated as recently as 1995 in the grand carnival parade of both San Nicolas and Oranjestad. In addition to the Invaders, many other local steelbands such as the Sunny Island Steel Orchestra, Happy Islanders,

and the Young Stars remain popular with locals and tourists alike, performing regularly at public events, and in the hotels. (On Aruba a distinction is made between a steelband which only uses pans (the Invaders) and a steel orchestra [all the other Island bands] which are mixed with electric instruments. Although the original pan men of the 50s and 60s were predominantly of British West Indian descent, today the bands are fully integrated with Arubans of all ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds.

The steelbands have not dominated the parades since the arrival of the popular beat bands of the 1960s.<sup>lxxv</sup> The roadbands were carried on trucks mounted with speakers, and unlike the pan men who were on foot and had to take regular rest stops, the roadbands could keep going longer. Further, because the electric instrument could deliver much louder music than the steelbands, this signaled the end of an era for the Aruban steelband beginning in 1980s. This demise can also be linked to the departure from the Island of many Trinidadians, and the unsuccessful attempt to merge the steelband music with the Latin-American rhythms, so favored by native Arubans.

Today, the roadbands dominate the parades, together with the popular drum and brass bands. After all, carnival is not carnival without the traditional beat of the drums. The disco vans with their disc jockeys, sound systems and taped soca roadmarch music are increasingly popular -- mainly because they are much cheaper to hire. Live music is still preferred by the carnavalistas, however, and hired by those groups that can pay their high prices.

Since the 1960s, carnival has danced to the beat of the Aruban brassband music known as "Asambeho." Traditional brassband music has been played on Aruba since the formation of the first Aruban brassband at the Pan-Am Club of San Nicolas in 1930. On March 7<sup>th</sup> of that year, the Aruba Refinery Brassband was established with between 20 and 25 musicians.<sup>lxxvi</sup> This music was not particularly suited for dancing in carnival, so two San Nicolas musicians -- Arnold Beyde and his colleague Samuel Hodge -- began to experiment with different rhythms. They wanted to develop a sound for the brassband that would provide a fitting musical accompaniment for jump-ups and parades.

Blending the music of the samba, calypso, and the marching band, they created a brassband music with a sound, rhythm and beat suitable for dancing. The melody of the Asambeho is carried by wind instruments -- the trumpet, trombone, and saxophone, while the beat is carried by a bass drum, a light drum, and a snare drum. The infectious music made its debut in 1967 when the band accompanied the Goldfinger Fan Club carnival group. The name for this novel music, however, was not chosen until several years later through a 1985 contest. Asambeho derives from a combination of the authors names -- Arnold SAMuel BEyde HOdge. The fact that the Asambeho has been embraced by all Arubans has made the music a new symbol of national identity. A recent comment by the Minister for Health, Sport and Culture, Dr. Lili Beke, states that:

One of the treasures [of our Island] is the rhythm born here, Asambeho, which will finally receive its place. Information on the Asambeho has been compiled and will be distributed to all official channels. It will become another identity of Aruba, just like our language, Papiamentu [Lili Beke].<sup>lxxvii</sup>

The calypso has been a part of the Aruba carnival since 1964. Calypsos written and composed for each year's carnival are entered into the calypso contest where the winner receives the title of Calypsonian. Since the Trinidad calypso took root in Aruban soil, it has been nourished and shaped by local cultural influences. Some of its integral elements, however, have been retained. The convention that the singers should adopt *sobriquets* (descriptive name) like the Mighty Spoiler, Lord Melody, and The Mighty Sparrow, has continued in Aruba with names like Lord Cobashi, King Paul, Lord Boxoe,

Mighty Talent, King Surpriser, Mighty Gold Teeth, Lord Cachete, Challenger, Long Roy, Tattoo, and Mighty Rusty. Writing on the Trinidad calypso, Errol Hill suggests that it remains an important outlet for the release of social tensions and frustrations in which:

No topic is too sacrosanct, no individual too renowned to escape public exposure and ridicule, if, in the opinion of the Calypsonian, such treatment is merited. He is a great leveler of social distinctions. He reminds us of our common humanity, and the best singers perform their ancient corrective role with dedicated seriousness [Hill 1976:78].

The Aruban calypso pokes fun at local figures and national politicians alike. It is still the unofficial newspaper of the people, expressing social, economic and political concerns through wit, words, and music in both serious and comedic ways. One example is this shot across the government's bows by popular San Nicolas composer, Ramon Sharpe:

You promise us a price control  
You forgot about that  
But you want to nationalize the world  
This I tellin' you flat  
You *zozobro* [are fooling] the whole community  
Man, you nailin' us to the cross  
When we take back we solidarity  
It is you who'll suffer the loss

Rice gone up, peas gone up  
Pigtail gone up, pork gone up  
Wait till 1982 come 'round  
Somebody comin' down

It was ten cents to use the phone  
You makin' us confuse  
Because we don't have a thirteen cents coin  
One less service to use  
You promised to build some public toilets  
In discreet places in town  
Charging fifty for a man to sit  
And a guilder to put it down

Beef gone up, Strap fish gone up  
Tail gone up, Saltfish gone up  
Wait till 1982 come 'round  
Somebody comin' down.

[Excerpt from "Somebody Comin' Down" (1981) by Ramon Sharpe]

The ability of the Aruban Calypsonian to sing extempore is still admired and appreciated. Although no true picong tradition exists in Aruba, Calypsonians frequently mock or respond to each other in song, and occasionally extempore at the same venue. For example, this response by Mighty Talent to Mighty Hippie's boasting calypso in which he compared the size of their respective anatomies and prowess with women while brandishing different sizes of sausages at the audience:

Now Mighty Hippie won't you please tell me  
There's one thing I don't understand  
The only way you would know how my hot dog go  
'Cause you are playing with it in your hand!

You like the sauce, hmmm... finger lickin' good  
The secret's out now Hippie, publicize you never should  
People asking who's the boss  
He tell you, Talent is the man with the pepper sauce!

[Excerpt from the calypso "We" by Claudius "Mighty Talent" Phillips]

One of Aruba's first Calypsonians, Lord Cobashi, states that the "smutty" calypso is greatly appreciated and makes full use of the double entendre which he describes as "an interpretation that comes from a voice in your head." A popular recent road jam gave the Arubans plenty of reason to laugh as they danced and flirted to the suggestive lyrics of "Tighter":

A woman with plenty flesh round she navel  
Invite a man like me for a dance  
I lose my head and fall in a trance  
Then I realize that this woman has some very serious intentions  
Grab on to my waist like a devil seeking blood for he satisfaction  
I couldn't get away, no way  
This woman like a virus on me all day  
I couldn't get away, no way  
Rusty, I love you is what she say.

Chorus:

Tighter\_\_\_\_\_she beggin' for more  
She had me wrestlin' down on the floor  
Tighter\_\_\_\_\_she squeezin' my waist  
And both she knee them jam in my face  
Tighter\_\_\_\_\_she start to insist  
Is only me now dyin' to resist  
Tighter\_\_\_\_\_she startin' to bawl  
And I could hardly breathe I want fall  
Tighter\_\_\_\_\_Jouvert mornin'  
Tighter\_\_\_\_\_Lago sport park  
Tighter\_\_\_\_\_Anywhere it dark  
Tighter\_\_\_\_\_blow brass

[Excerpt from the roadmarch "Tighter" (1992) by Anthony "Mighty Rusty" Gario]

Most calypsos disappear after the carnival season is over. This is partly because of their topicality. But some remain popular for two or three carnival seasons, with a rare few becoming age old classics. The appeal of the calypso is in its words rather than melody. Through this emphasis the language of the Trinidadian calypso developed "a picturesque argot of its own, incorporating the language idioms and music of different

cultures" (Hill 1976:70). The Aruban calypso is similarly dynamic, absorbing lexical items from other language groups on Aruba, notably, Spanish, Dutch, and Papiamentu. With the increasing social and professional integration of the Islands musicians, and the fact that the new generation of calypso singers are Island born, there is a some tension between the first and second generation of English Calypsonians, and between these groups and the native Aruban singers who try their hand at the English calypso. The Aruban calypso is being shaped by these contradictions and influences and by other music genres inside and outside the Island. <sup>lxxviii</sup>

In recent years, the Aruban calypso has become more Latinized under the cultural influence of the native Aruban musicians despite the resistance of some older, traditionally inclined Calypsonians. Innovation is discouraged through the application of strict rules for performance in the Calypsonian competitions. These including the correct "accent, palate and feeling" standards which are impossible to attain for a native Papiamentu speakers. This is not to say that there are any serious rifts between musicians, on the contrary, the Island's musicians are well integrated, and in turn integrate the Aruban society as a whole through a shared love of music. However, music cannot be prevented from innovation and development over the longer term and is always a reflection of the changing socio-cultural environment. Because Aruba's environment has been subject to radical changes since the 1930s, the Island music has similarly undergone transformations. With respect to the Aruban calypso, for example, popular new generation San Nicolas Calypsonian, Claudius "Mighty Talent" Phillips, has infused his calypsos with a mix of English, Spanish, Papiamentu and Dutch, reflecting the Islands diverse ethnicities. He incorporates traditional instruments into his compositions such as the Indian calco and wiri, while consciously maintaining the traditional function and structure of his calypsos as a reflection of his own British West Indian cultural heritage. But as a product of two cultural spheres of influence, Phillips is tuned to the music of both worlds: while responding through his songs to the contemporary political, economic and social problems around him on Aruba, his music also reflects his generation's mixed aesthetic of cross-cultural music flows and languages:

Aids it don't care if it's he or she  
 So you women please beware  
 and you men use a *handschoen* down there <sup>lxxix</sup>  
 On every local radio  
 In Courant and Diario  
 You read about the same old crime  
*Muher a worde viola* <sup>lxxx</sup>  
*Menor di edad abusa* <sup>lxxxi</sup>  
 Can we solve this problem in time  
 These dirty men putting us to shame  
 Give Aruba a nasty name  
 If they feeling so damn horny  
 Let they go spend they money in some *hanchi* <sup>lxxxii</sup>  
 It's a shame to be out raping  
 It's a shame, please stop child molesting.  
 All this crime go me in shock  
 If I was judge I cut off their \_\_\_\_\_

[Excerpt from a calypso by Claudius "Mighty Talent" Phillips]

The music that accompanies the Aruba carnival parades is the roadmarch, a soca rhythm with a lively beat, catchy melody, and a join-in refrain. Soca is primarily a dance music designed for parties and carnivals. The advent of the soca began on Trinidad in 1970 when "Lord Shorty" set out to improve on calypso's customary bouncy, slightly ragged, but basically bland accompaniment pattern. With arranger Ed Watson, he came up with a composite pattern they called "soca," which in a loosely standardized form, has been the norm in most calypsos since. The chorus of soca artist Arrow's 1983 hit "Hot, hot, hot" typifies the soca beat, and is one of the few songs used in roadmarch jams for more than a decade. The term "soca" is used to distinguish dance music from the calypso proper "whose essence remains the text." Soca lyrics on the other hand are quite inconsequential although instructive to body movement in the parades in a sort of "Simon says" fashion.

The common theme of soca songs is "jam and wine," the popular West Indian dance style which features a "pneumatic pelvic rotation, ideally executed in synchronicity with another adjacent "winer" (Manuel 1995:193-194). In Aruba this "wining" dance movement is referred to as the "socarengue," combining the music of soca and the dance pattern of the meringue. When the soca roadmarch breaks-away, the rhythmic two-step shuffle with swaying hips, breaks into wild pelvic bumps and grinds, expressing the essence of freedom exemplified in carnival (Ahye 1978:18-20). The roadmarch king is the singer of the winning roadmarch song which provides dance music for jump-ups and parades. In fact when you hear it, it is hard to stand still. The melody and tempo are more important than the lyrics, and must have a chorus that revelers can join in. Roadmarches should ideally contain lyrics that call also for a physical action response, for example, "put your hands in the air," "slide and duck," "jump back and forward," "shake your bum," and so on. The "leggo," "mambo," or "break-away" is the part of the song which instructs on a physical interpretation of the roadmarch, and signals the moment for the carnavalistas to let themselves go wild:

No time to relax,  
It's carnival  
*Bo ta cla*  
*Tur prepara*<sup>xxxiii</sup>

You can't go to sleep  
It's carnival  
*Bo ta cla*  
*Pa celebra*

Aruba Jouvert Morning  
All the way  
Jammin' straight  
'Til next day

Mambo:

Slide and duck

Slide and duck

Slide and duck

Sli\_\_\_\_\_ding

[Roadmarch: "Slide and Duck" (1991) Richard "Lord Tattoo" Quandt]

Although the official roadmarch for the season is chosen by a panel of judges, the unofficial winner is the song that played most often by the carnavalistas to accompany them in the parades. This becomes the "road jam" for that year. A popular road jam will be heard in the parades for two or three years in succession. Aruba has some fine roadbands that perform in the parades, and as back-up groups for the roadmarch kings and queens, and the Calypsonians.

**1. A man o'words**

### Commentary and meaning in carnival song

Carnival plays off its context, and in Aruba this comprises significant social concerns and political issues (Oostindie 1994). The impact of tourism, high immigration, illegal aliens, drug trafficking, rising crime, unequal regional development, language and education, race and class relations, identity politics, and the loss of cultural traditions are all favorite foods for carnival consumption in Aruba -- concerns that most regions of the world are dealing with today.

The Aruban calypso takes front stage during carnival season as an advocate for the concerns of the community. For example, a recent composition by King Surpriser sang about the great relief the Island felt when the oil refinery was reopened by Coastal, promising renewed economics benefits to the San Nicolas community, in particular. On other issues of concern, female Calypsonian Singing Jane addressed the problems of sexual abuse and the dishonesty of local politicians:

I want 'em stop all this child molesting  
Women stand up for your rights  
I know a lot of you facin' dis problem  
With your man molestin' your child.  
Now I know this ain't so simple  
But you should set the example  
Stand behind he or she  
Make them confident ...

#### Chorus:

We want to clean up this mess  
Oh we can clean it up  
We want to clean up this mess  
With your help we can clean it up.

Well in the past some parents were molested too  
and you know what that thing can do  
So don't be pretending not to see  
When your child is livin' in misery  
Well he's dyin' to be brave and come out of he shell  
And make sure the sucker get punished well  
And if you don't agree with his penalty  
Just come up and you look for me ...  
He 'goin to be gone when I slice he plantain.

#### Chorus:

Oh we want to clean up this mess  
Oh we can clean it up  
We want to clean up this mess  
With your help we can clean it up.

We goin' for the politicians now, man!

Well it have a lot of ignorants walkin' around  
Cursing and fighting and doin' wrong.  
But they don't understand that every one

Is allowed to have his own opinion.  
The politicians walking round and round  
In public they draggin' each other down  
But when you close them doors and they drinking up  
They theifin' out of the same blasted pot.

Chorus:

Oh we want to clean up this mess  
Oh we can clean it up  
We want to clean up this mess  
With your help we can clean it up.

[Excerpt from the calypso "We can clean it up," by Singing Jane]

Mighty Talent's calypso compositions often address controversial issues, and sometimes hit a nerve with the government. But they know that Talent's songs represent the views of many Islanders and are known to have responded in different ways to his needling, or "sting" as he calls it. A recent popular calypso by Talent, "We," took on the issues of racial discrimination, the favoring of foreign artists over Aruba's own, and the Island-wide concern that foreigners are getting all the jobs:

They say Aruba don't got no color question  
And no discrimination  
But there's a bigger problem on this small Island  
It's a shame something must be done

While you and you and you get the opportunity  
To make a name for yourself in your community  
Your own people live here for so long  
Criticize you as if you gone.

Chorus:

But its We ... who should live like family  
But its We ... creating so much jealousy  
In Aruba its already known  
We'd rather help strangers than help we own.

There's another problem in hotel sections  
That's hurting both you and me  
Why do some owners hire outsiders  
Just to pay them all less money.  
So even you when you go to university  
And with such get your bachelor degree  
Even though you get your diploma  
They still give your job to an outsider.

Chorus:

Cause its We ... who should be making the money  
But its We ... who deserve a better salary  
Outsiders gettin' promotion  
But it's the local who shows them how the job is done.

I am totally against any government  
Who ain't supporting we carnival  
Who rather spend money on the jazz festival ...  
They go abroad and contract entertainers  
Movie stars, even popular singers  
Pay them money from the government  
But we local singers – not a blasted cent!

Chorus:

Cause its We ... should recognize our own talent  
But its We ... who are being abused and usually left out  
Here's a lesson, we should learn it fast  
Local comes first, and outsiders last!

[Excerpt from the calypso "We" by Claudius "Mighty Talent" Phillips]

As a conversation with the audience, the response to a calypso on Aruba is an integral part of the performance. The crowd cheers loudly when they agree with the sentiments and or opinions expressed by the singer. A highly participatory audience denotes a "successful" calypso. A lack of response (as when the native Arubans try to sing calypso) denotes a failed performance.

Charles "Lord Cobashi" Groeneveldt, one of Aruba's first calypso singers writes a weekly editorial in a local newspaper. He also has a weekly radio talk show in which he airs the peoples' grievances. Cobashi is a highly gifted orator -- truly a "man-o'-words" found throughout the British West Indies (Abrahams 1970:163). Through his newspaper and radio editorials Cobashi calls attention to the economic and social problems of San Nicolas, trying to shame the government into action. He says that many Calypsonians write songs based on his broadcasts:

One Calypsonian spoke personally to me and said "I sang all this because of what I read in your editorial." He said he followed and read every one of them. I observe that the Mighty Tattoo, this year's Calypso King, sang concerning what I am doing for the village in San Nicolas. And I also observed that the Mighty Talent sang also concerning Charlie's Bar, and swimming at Baby Beach, which is discriminatory. They are so dumb that they allow tourists, whether black or white with a V-car [rental] to enter, and you as a native-born Aruban cannot. Its private land, but the beaches belong to Aruba. The calypso influences the whole of the community [Lord Cobashi].

The government is aware of the "sting" that calypso gives, and Claudius Phillips says that he is frequently handed scandalous *melee*, or gossip, by politicians about certain individuals, and asked to incorporate the information into his lyrics. But he has always retained his authorial and artistic autonomy and does not care to be used by the same people that he criticizes on behalf of the ordinary citizen:

I get approached by politicians who ask me to sing stuff about other politicians. They come and say "put this piece in your song." But I already have my stuff written down and I don't let people influence me. I sing about everything I think the public should know. If I want to sing about someone, I'll sing about someone. They just have to wait to hear what I am going to sing about. A lot of stuff that is troubling them, they come to me and I can express it in my song. They feel that

by me singing about it, it will make a change [Mighty Talent].

All Arubans are concerned about the social and economic problems presented by tourists and outsiders, and are worried about the many thousands of illegal aliens on the Island that many believe are trying to make Aruba their home. The calypso takes on these issues also:

I took a walk in my neighborhood,  
It's only Spanish I hearin' for so  
I met a Spanish lady that day,  
And listen to what she say,  
She say *negro bonito*  
*yo quiero casar contigo* <sup>lxxxiv</sup>  
She had me confused and wonderin'  
I tell her, no *senora bella*  
You ain't gettin Lord Cachete's *passaporte*

Chorus:

Oh lord, confusion  
go call immigration  
Oh lord, confusion  
go call immigration  
They want eat up my food  
and drink up my wine  
They want to marry me  
and then leave me behind  
Aruban lady will love for all time  
and they'll love for more than a while  
If Cachete go East, if Cachete go West,  
Aruban ladies will still be the best.

[Excerpt from the calypso "Confusion" performed by Roy "Lord Cachete" Lintz]

Such issues are addressed also by carnival mas groups. Aiky Croes, for example, participates in the parade each year with his comic group "Crazy Team." They most often draw their themes from local news which is meaningful to the local population rather than outsiders. Recent themes have included the problems of dirty tap water, imported cockroach infested flour, the dishonesty of the politicians, and the on-going power struggle between the carnival committee and the association of musical artists. In a recent carnival the group took on the problem of illegal immigrants:

We go with local issues that the Aruban public can understand, like the Dominican illegals that the police are chasing all over the place. So we had police chasing them, and throwing them in a dog catcher on the trailer. We don't use words, only mime, because the music is so loud they can't hear what you say. We act it out over and over again [Aiky Croes].

## **1. Going all the way**

## CHAPTER TEN

### Contest, representation, and meaning in the carnival

#### Contesting history and authenticity

To ask for the meaning of carnival on Aruba is to elicit the answer "it's a big feast of yourself." As the ultimate street party, carnival is a time for excess, fun, and self-indulgence that stretches from mid-January to the beginning of Lent. It marks the pre-Lenten season for Catholics, picks up the slack between Christmas and Easter for commerce, and provides a celebratory opening of the new calendrical year for everyone. This period is also known as the "hot season," which does not refer to the climate but to the heat generated by the carnival festivities. Six long weeks of jump-ups, competitions, parties and parades. On the eve of Ash Wednesday, the Island begins its "cooling down" presaged by the fiery sacrifice of Momo, the Spirit of Carnival. The phrase "a feast of yourself," however, signifies the deeper meaning of the festival. As the Arubans explore, re-invent, and elaborate themselves for re-presentation the carnival indeed becomes a feast -- a feast of identity with representations of Islanders' national origins liberally peppered throughout the parades, including Colombian, Venezuelan, Chinese, Dutch, and British West Indian

Although an inclusive Island-wide national festival, metaphorical conversations between native and non-native groups and social classes bring a dynamic subtext to carnival performances. This is hardly surprising since carnivals everywhere play off their cultural, social, political and economic concerns. As illustrated by the lyrics of calypsos and tumbas, there are pressing local and national problems such as drug trafficking and rising crime, unequal regional development and illegal immigration, the impacts of tourism and the perceived loss of cultural traditions. In addition, a dispute between English and native Arubans over the origins of the festival contributes an underlying tension to the season. This last issue reflects in the polarization of carnival events between Oranjestad and San Nicolas, noted earlier.

As explained in chapter eight, when the native Arubans formed a carnival committee and organized the Island's first "official" public carnival in 1955, the Trinidadians of San Nicolas already had their own carnival committee.<sup>lxxxv</sup> However, as a heterogeneous community, they lacked the strong kinship structures possessed by the native Arubans. These form the basis of the social, political, and economic networks which are necessary for the efficient development, management and financial support of a successful carnival. Because of this, the English players argue that the carnival was stolen from them by the native Arubans. This, some claim, has resulted in the erosion of meaning and the loss of authenticity. Any written or oral claims relating to this issue heightens tensions between the two groups. An example of this dispute is illustrated by a 1956 carnival program with an editorial written by a Tivoli Club member:

Tivoli has established that great Tradition of Carnaval in Aruba...upholding a tradition set by themselves. TIVOLI = The standard of Carnaval. Authors name withheld for the guys safety [Anon].

This self-serving taunt was fueled by a contentious relationship between the two groups stemming from the fact that the native Arubans had been displaced in the refinery labor force by the British West Indians due to their higher language and work skills (see chapter four).<sup>lxxxvi</sup> Today, a marked (but less obvious) ethnic and regional dichotomy continues between the English Afro-Arubans and the natives. Although the Island is

relatively well integrated with all ethnic groups and social classes working well together, any underlying tensions between them tend to surface during the carnival season.<sup>lxxxvii</sup>

Although carnival has been well managed by the native middle classes for over forty years,<sup>lxxxviii</sup> the English still dispute their ability to run the festival, claiming that they "do not have carnival in their blood." This is strongly countered by a native who said that a generation of children was born after the carnival was established and grew up within its culture. Carnival, therefore, is in their blood and a part of Aruban culture, it is "an Aruban thing." The allegation of appropriation is conceded, however, by some natives. Even the president of the carnival committee boasts that:

Carnival is an Aruban thing. The Tivoli Club started the carnival in their club before the British West Indians came in. The role of the carnival committee is to coordinate the whole carnival so that everything may be orderly... they [all participants] have to come through us. We want to make carnival a typical Aruban festival you know, that's why we have to handle it. Now when you say Aruba, you say carnival. We are an *isla carnavaal* [Milo Croes].

The basic structure of carnival and the majority of carnival, described in chapter eight, were established by the English. Although specific Trinidad imports did not survive past the 1960s, for example, stickfighting, Moco Jumbies, Devil Bands, Biblical Mas, Flag Women, and the wearing of sifter masks. These remain in the imagination and are passionately idealized as central to a "real" carnival. Calypso wars (picong), and wars between rival costume groups and steelbands are no longer a part of the carnival but memories of these fuel conflicts over authenticity and contested origins. For the English players, these were authentic and exemplary models of, and for, Caribbean carnival. Surviving masquerades, such as Sailorboy and Military groups, Amerindian and African masquerades, and large Original or Historical groups survived transplantation from Trinidad for different reasons. Either they were extant, in some form, in elite club celebrations (clowns, pirates, devils, Indians and Zulus, for example) or else they thrived because they were able to be successfully re-coded with local meanings.

For the English San Nicolas carnival community, this re-glossing in native Aruban terms has, in part, caused the loss of meaningful historic context, authenticity, and the embodied symbols these themes once generated. Gone are the narrative frames, the accompanying costume paraphernalia, and the characteristic dance steps that were associated with different carnival characters. The few remaining English mas players assert that the natives are "nibbling around the edges" of what is left of their original carnival. This belief goes back to a much-cited incident during the first carnival Queen elections held in San Nicolas in 1955. There, after minor scuffles by some San Nicolas residents over the choice of the Queen, the elections were promptly moved to the capital Oranjestad where they have since stayed. But San Nicolas (also known as Music City and Chocolate City) is still acknowledged by all Arubans as "the heart of the Island's music" and has managed to "hang on" to its Calypsonian contest. The town has also held on to the Trinidad-style Jouvèrt Morning jump-up, although some see this as "under threat" since the far northern town of Noord introduced their native version of this event, the "Cocoyoco (Rooster) Jam."

The continuing arguments over the management and authenticity of carnival is fueled, in part, by the Afro-Arubans' relative social marginalization in Aruban society, where they are still considered "outsiders." This causes their sharp criticism of the way Arubans play carnival. The older English mas players speak of a successful masquerade in terms of competent and believable performance, one that rises above the level of fiction, that is, of make believe or play, to become a non-fiction:

They don't know how to play carnival because it's not in their blood they are tryin' to take the carnival over in their way, to change certain things. They don't play mas right. They have good material but they don't know how to use it. Mas is a very serious thing and they makin' a mockery of it [Edgar Connor].

## **1. Talking to Goy**

### Nativization of the carnival

As described in chapters eight and nine, native Arubans have embraced the Trinidad model of carnival. This is, in large part, because it serves to differentiate them from Curacao who established their own carnival using tumba music in the parades, as opposed to the use of the soca roadmarch in Aruba. Moreover, the carnival committee tries to culturally balance the festival in order to show a native Aruban face to the tourists, one that represents and reflects the Island's native culture. As part of this effort, the carnival committee introduced a tumba contest into the program in 197.<sup>lxxxix</sup> In the ensuing years it has been modified to serve the same function as the calypso (as a vehicle for satire and information). Thus, the two music genres tend to both complement and oppose one another:

In San Nicolas, the people coming from Trinidad and the English Islands had their own way of doing carnival. From them we have the calypso but the tumba is typical Aruban music. It's between a rumba and a meringue, but it has its own sound. We put the tumba into the carnival so we can play our own music. The people feel that the tumba is something of their own, with our own composed songs in our own words [Milo Croes].

There is an asymmetry in participation between two competitive musical events. The English do not enter the tumba competition in Oranjestad, but native-Aruban singers often enter the Calypsonian contest in San Nicolas. Despite a singer's popularity across all Island groups, their performances fail to win the calypso prize. Many assert that this is because:

The feelin' is not there. If the natives sing tumba, the feeling is there because its in their native tongue, Papiamentu. They would not fully understand what the real Trinidadians sing, because of the expressions. Calypso is tongue, it's the accent, the way of "pronunciatin" the words [Lord Cobashi].

The dichotomies in music, region, language, and ethnicity are encapsulated in these calypso verses written on the subject of a recent kaiso festival on Aruba which featured the renowned Calypsonian Mighty Sparrow:

Entertainment center [in Oranjestad], what a great theater  
They puttin' on tremendous shows  
It has beautiful view, yes for me and you  
But not a place for Mighty Sparrow.

He's the man who bring his soul to me and you  
Especially to the people of this community [San Nicolas]  
Next time, please avoid a loss  
Bring Sparrow's show to San Nicolas.

'Cause its We ... who got Caribbean tempo  
And its We ... San Nicolas who is city of kaiso  
I am sure you would not agree  
If tumba contest come Chocolate City! You hear? Ha, ha, ha!

[Excerpt from "We" by Claudius "Mighty Talent" Phillips]

The current president of the carnival committee worries that there are not enough native elements in the carnival and encourages masquerade groups to “portray things that are Aruban like the kwihi tree, the divi-divi tree,<sup>1xc</sup> and Aruban fish.” The insistence of the inclusion of symbols that are native rather than imported alludes to the processual construction of identity to counter rapid immigration and cultural change.

The native *tipico* masquerade carnival groups were introduced specifically to assert local tradition and culture. These are deployed partly to show outsiders the “real” Aruba, partly to exclude others, and partly to show the younger generation that they are losing knowledge of their heritage and a sense of their traditional culture. It is for this reason that these groups tend to mobilize symbols of an idealized rural past as themes in the parades. The Island's natural surroundings provide a constant source of inspiration for costumes. Birds such as the *troupial* and *chuchubi*, local fish and insects, the tall cactus and low-lying aloe, the natural bridge, and the vast rock formations have all inspired road and body pieces from the mundane to the spectacular. These representations of land allude to a sense of “belonging” among native Arubans which relates to both legal and emotional (but not necessarily nurturing) ties to the land. Some claim that if your ancestors owned a piece of farmland, or *cunucu*, then you are the descendant of a “real” Aruban family. For most natives, the *cunucu* resonates with emotion. It is an ancient place *tras di lomba di Dios* (behind the back of God) that is associated closely with Indian origins, myths, and autonomy. Thinking about, and using the land in the mode of the past achieves a profound sense of *communitas* for Arubans. Although traditional farming activities have all but ceased, the old *cunucus* with their characteristic cactus fences are still maintained and valued as symbols of indigenosity. Traditional *cunucu* houses (made from mud, grass, and cactus stems) are often depicted in the carnival despite the enormous amount of work that goes into building them. Traditional aloe farming equipment is also pulled along in the parades. Popular folkloric festivities such as *dera garaci* and the native *dande* music with its traditional instruments (*tambor*, *cuatro*, *wiri*, violin and *marimbula*) are represented in carnivalesque style.

In the district of Noord with its traditional character, the carnival committee frequently sponsors groups that bring traditional folkloric themes in the parades. The members meet at the *barrio* community center which is decorated with murals depicting an Indian and more recent rural past and reflect an Island-wide tension between an older generation and a younger generation for whom the ways of the past are of little value. The Noord costumed parades display this conflict through artistic representations of a largely lost way of life, traditions and ethics:

We participate to keep up our folklore, our culture. We have presented traditional festivals like San Juan ... and typical houses, and typical dresses of the people who were here formally. There are some people who want to change, but the board wants to stay with folkloric themes that represent our culture. The old people stay and come back every year they come back but the young are going to the other groups. They don't understand the consequence of their decision [Ovito Tromp].

The cultural institute in Oranjestad is similarly concerned with the maintenance of Aruba's cultural heritage and identity and believes it can help achieve this goal by

sponsoring carnival groups that educate the public about the Island's social history. These carnivalesque enactments of the past, however, "exist somewhere between history and fiction" (Schechner 1985:38). This is because Aruban history, as told in performance, has been retold and reshaped through idealization and elaboration with aspects selectively included or excluded:

We are trying to make the people conscious about what happened in the prehistory of Aruba. Its important to educate your own people. A few years back, we started to give carnival group prizes for people who came with things from the Island. Last year a group came with "Flora and Fauna" and this year the winning group presented the music of our Island. Here in Aruba people are proud to say our ancestors were Indians, but it's difficult to trace back. *Panbati* [beaten sorghum bread] for example, is one of the few Indian things that remains. We do represent the Indians of Aruba in the carnival. Often they design what they think is Aruban Indian, but it's more like a North American Indian. Next year we are helping to design a group with the history before and after Columbus. Although we are trying to educate people with this group, because it's carnival, we won't be able to keep it exactly as it was [Evelino Fingal].

The most commonly portrayed link with the past is through the "original" Indian masquerade. As part of the separation movement the Arubans began to re-evaluate the term "Indian" as a positive mark of social otherness, and as a means of differentiating themselves from the rest of the Dutch Antilles, especially from Curacao whose population is mainly of African descent. Increasingly, although predominantly a Trinidadian masquerade (expressing a bond with the Indians through the shared experience of slavery), a local semantic patina has been overlaid which alludes to the Island's own Arawak Caiquetio and Jirajara Indian past which the groups creatively explore, redefine or re-invent in serious or playful frames.

## **1. That support thing**

### Carnival queen in a native frame

Native female identity is treated to some elaboration during the Aruban carnival season through the festival's central figure, the carnival queen. Queen contests everywhere "showcase values, concepts, and behavior that exist at the center of a group's sense of itself and exhibit values of morality, gender, and place" (Ballerino-Cohen, Wilk, and Stoeltje 1996:2) and Aruba's Carnival Queen Elections are no different in this respect. The role of Queen in Aruba differs from other Caribbean carnivals in which the Queen is seen solely as a symbol of sexuality and fertility to be commodified and consumed (Kinser 1990), an attitude that is not surprising since sex has always been the central food of the festival in response to the Catholic church's ban on indulgences of the flesh during Lent. This included not only meat but also no sexual activity. Carnival alludes also to turning of the seasons toward the renewed exuberance of spring with its association of lovemaking. Thus, from the earliest carnivals of the middle ages, the festivities have been viewed and practiced as sexual -- one reason for all the preening and dancing (Kinser 1990).

Such a gloss of the meaning of the Carnival Queen poses a problem to conservative Catholic Aruba which still tends to support a double standard of sexual morality with some cognitive separation of male and female domains (Kalm 1974, Green 1969). Woman in the home is wife, mother, daughter, and virgin. But as carnival queens, notes Parker for Brazil, women become "potentially edible" (Parker 1991). As she reigns as queen over the hot season of carnival, a native Aruban female might well be seen as the embodiment of Caribbean heat and sensuality -- to some, the ideal woman. On Aruba, such a reading of a Carnival Queen in such terms does not reflect the native ideal, and interpretations of her in this role are controlled. This is accomplished in different ways and for different reasons. First, as queen she embodies the meaning of carnival. To this end, she must be shimmering, joyful, and embody the party spirit. Judges (invited tourists) are instructed not to judge bodily beauty, but rather vivacity, joyous personality, and the ability to keep dancing *sin stop* (without a rest).

Your arms must be open, you have to be feminine. You must keep your hands up, they express who you are. Never stop, always stay moving, its very important. And never, *never*, stop smiling [Adira Halley, Carnival Queen, 1991].

Secondly, as a representative native female (black candidates have never been elected), she symbolizes the native ethos which embodies a set of appropriate morals, values and social behaviors. The carnival committee ensures, therefore, that these codes are not broken by any lewd behavior that might undermine the face of restraint and moral harmony. To this end, the elections are well policed, and contestants are censored if they wear costumes that are too revealing. Their deportment on the stage is prescribed and performed within certain limits of propriety. Overt sexuality must be contained as potentially dangerous because this "causes men to fight and disturb the season."

When I was at the queen elections, men starting fighting. A man came in drunk and wanted to kiss me. But my mother told him off [Adira Halley].

Although drinking is part of cultural life for men on Aruba, they do more serious and overt drinking during carnival where it equates to "having a good time." At the large music events such as roadmarch and calypso finals, drunken audience members that climb up on to the stage to interfere with the performers are patiently tolerated, and drunken fist-

fighting are viewed as a side show. Such behavior outside the time and space of carnival, however, is considered as offensive and anti-social behavior.

The final reason to control the reading of a Queen is because she reflects the process of successful community shaping. The Arubans have always been district-oriented and until quite recently, the Island was divided into neighborhoods with little social contact between them. Even today, there is a marked preponderance of names associated with different districts - Croes in Santa Cruz, Tromp in Noord, and Arends in Oranjestad. During carnival season people tend to withdraw into their clubs and barrios to show fierce kinship regional allegiance, and competition can be quite hot:

They are very competitive. They compete against each other and between districts. There was a big fight between two districts about whose Queen should have won. I didn't know that grown ups could behave that bad [Carlos de Freitas].

In her role as a candidate, a female stands for her barrio. In the time of preparation, metaphorically she becomes the "queen bee" as her community nourishes, preens, trains, and embellishes her. This relationship is emphasized by the awarding of points for "community support" at the final Island-level election. A winning candidate, therefore, implicitly denotes a supportive and successful community. Support is manifested also by the party aesthetic of her attendants on the floor of the arena. They are "colorful" (they wear tee shirts with the candidates portrait, and carry huge bunches of balloons in the candidates chosen color theme). They are "joyous" (they dance, laugh, chant, and cheer). They are "noisy" (supporters are accompanied by brassbands, whistles, and air horns) -- the louder the better!

The child Queen competitions are carbon copies of the adult Queen elections in every way except the audience tends to be limited towards family and friends. The children's Queen elections together with the children's parades were established to ensure the future of carnival in Aruba:

We must put the carnival into the blood of the children to ensure the survival of our carnival [Milo Croes].

The idea of community support is clearly central to these elections at every level and the gatherings exhibit a good deal of sociability and a sense of close community and small town friendliness. As one audience member informed me "Oh. I come here to support the child of a friend, a neighbor, just for support." Everywhere at the community level one sees and hears the support thing, this show of the ability to pull in community backing as a measure of your community standing. Although marriage among the native Arubans historically occurred most frequently within the extended family (Phalen 1977), this pattern is increasingly breaking down with the changing attitudes of the younger generation. Social mobility between the general Aruban population and the elite families, however, is still relatively restricted. This is reflected in the control of membership in the elite social clubs like the Tivoli. The Tivoli Club withdrew from the main parades when they became more accessible to the general population. They formed their own complex of carnival activities which are either private, or by invitation only. But things are changing with the different attitude of the younger generation:

The kids now have another mentality and don't follow the orders of their parents and they have no interest in the clubs. They say to their parents "You want me to marry him, but I don't like him." In schools they meet somebody from Santa

Croes or Paradera, and against the will of their parents, they marry these guys. The older generation tries to keep up the clubs by organizing nice parties, and introducing new members. If somebody of the club knows you, they introduce you, you don't have to be a member, and the club stays strong. Formally, these clubs didn't except anybody besides members. To join you had to have the right name and level of income [Ito Tromp].

### **1. Time for tumba**

### Carnival as a model of community

The discussion so far shows that the active space of carnival contains several possible views of Aruban society. First, as an ethnically heterogeneous but harmonious and orderly society. Second, as a modern and prosperous middle-class society that aspires to increased wealth. Third as a people with a high level of social morality, with a value for education, and a love of children and family. These representations are threatened by anti-structural elements encouraged by the implicit license the festival affords. Under the spell of Dionysus, spirit of gaiety and wine (in this case, beer, rum and whiskey) lewd behavior, fights, and rowdiness tend to surface. Hence, in an effort to contain these disruptive elements, the season opens with the re-ordering (limiting) of time and public space by the forces of control. These are the physical barricades designed to separate order from disorder, the carnavalistas from spectators, the peaceful from the rowdy, and the tourist from harm.

The carnival brings this potential for disorder to the Island at a time when the Island is at its most vulnerable and at its most open (tourist high season). The carnival committee organizes the carnival season rather efficiently and tries to make sure that the over fifty events are well policed and orderly. This generates a public spectacle of harmony and safeness which is truly indicative of a growing national identity -- in fact, the carnival is an important integrative mechanism for national unity. Both the Aruban government and the Island's commercial interests want the carnival to be an orderly and un-dangerous affair which the visitor (and potential investor) can enjoy with a sense of security. The successful organization of the festivities, then, metaphorically displays to outsiders the Aruban's ability to organize, adapt to, and control, the demands of the local and outside worlds:

Our carnival is getting a good name. We are also known as the safest carnival in the world. We have no accidents, except one or two collisions, no fighting, no riots, no killing. Drunkenness yes, but just in a very decent way. Once a year they can drink publicly without being jailed, and the police don't arrest them. Even after such a big drinking party, where we have the whole of the population drinking, on Monday morning you won't see one person lying on the street [Milo Croes].

And:

In Brazil and Trinidad you hear of people being killed in the carnival. But in Aruba this is not true. In Aruba's carnival the people enjoy it and participate without such worries [John Flemming].

Thus, Aruba sees herself as distinctive even though her carnival shares most of the features of other Caribbean carnivals, particularly in the festivals's tendency to reflect the Island's social and political structures through their temporary overthrow or their ardent reaffirmation through performance. Aruba's bacchanal too has taken on a nativistic quality that serves to revitalize local culture and counter-balance the negative impacts of social change. And, as for other carnivals, the Aruba carnival offers a time and place for individuals, groups, and institutions to confront each other over social, economic and political interests and actions through competitive challenge.

Despite the angst over the past, the contradictory claims over the festival's genesis, and the continuing competitive nature of events that are fueled by real social and economic inequalities, during the time of preparation and anticipation, people come together in a single-mindedness usually absent in a plural society. In this sense,

the carnival also displays the process of a Caribbean Island coming into herself as an autonomous multicultural nation. Although playing carnival involves the assertion of individual and group identities, paradoxically, it also serves as an integrative social mechanism (a sweet glue) for the population as a whole. To play carnival in Aruba is to feel Aruban, to belong. This sense of belonging is attained through play.

Studied historically, the birth and development of Aruba's carnival provides insights into the history of relations between ethnic groups and social classes, between tradition and change, and the relationship between the local and the global. The distinct and primary focus of Aruba's bacchanal, however, is the continuing dichotomous discourse generated at its twinned birth which brings a dynamic subtext to the festival in the form of a power struggle for control over its future. However muted today, the question of "Who's carnival is it anyway?" remains a potent issue and provides the carnival with its festive dynamic and local identity.

## **1. Cooking pastechi**

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### Crafting native cultural identity in Aruba

#### Introduction

In chapter one, two fundamental questions were posed. First, how does a native population with a hybrid culture cohere as a cognitive whole within a place of many others? And second, why and how is this separate category of person constituted. In chapter four I presented a description of Aruban society given in both outsider (my own) and insider (native) terms. I also presented a model of native identity. In this chapter I discuss these in more detail and describe the structural and processual features of the model. Using examples from chapters six through ten, I will then demonstrate the way in which native identity is constructed and deployed. I begin by presenting the concept of cultural identity which I have developed during the course of my research.

The assertion of the self through social discourse, folkloric festivals, music and song is a manifestation of ethno-cultural differentiation practiced by communities everywhere. Among the social discourses that reveal representations of the native self is the conceptual hierarchical ordering (and re-ordering over time) of the Island's plural society. The physical landscape is also a site for the framing of nativeness as ideas and values assigned to the notion of physical place and social space are deployed in the historic validation of autochthony. Issues of cultural autonomy and self-determination are addressed in the deconstruction of the Dutch system of education. Native Arubans use festival performances and competitive events to assert their different history, native ethos, cultural style, and superior ranking in the social hierarchy. Opportunities for self-elaboration are found particularly in the dande festival, and during the carnival season in the Calypsonian contest, the tumba festival, and in the tipico and comico carnival masquerade groups.

By focusing on how symbol complexes are historically formed, controlled and directed meaningfully through expressive performance we can discover much about the cultural politics of a place. Stuart Hall contends that identities are never unified, rather they are increasingly fragmented and constructed across different antagonistic, discourses and practices. Subject to historicization, they are constantly in the process of change and transformation. Although they appear to invoke historical origins with which they continue to correspond, identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being. "Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation" (Hall 1996:3-4).

The continuing native presentation of self through music and festival performance, in particular, serves at least three needs. Boundary formation, or the desire to practice an internal differentiation between themselves and other Island groups. A response to touristic demands for something Aruban. And to display the forms and values of the past to the youngest generation of natives. As discussed in chapters six and seven, although Aruba has adapted well to the many external forces that have brought considerable economic, socio-cultural, and environmental change to the Island, many native Arubans are concerned about the decline of traditional culture and values. There is a counter-trend toward the strengthening of an exclusive indigenous identity separate from a inclusive national identity. As the majority population with the best political representation, they are in a position to take some control this process. For example, as indicated earlier in chapter six, the largely native Aruban government has developed a selective immigration policy to help curb unwanted cultural influences, and is now beginning to question whose interests does the Dutch education system serve.

This de-construction and re-thinking about education in local terms is, in part, a response to the Dutch who have long undermined the Aruban sense of self esteem by suggesting both explicitly and implicitly that the natives have no culture (Phalen 1977, Martis 1983, Hoetink 1990). This was illustrated in the quote given in chapter six suggesting that some Hollanders believe the natives incapable of thinking "deep thoughts," and thus still in need of Dutch language and culture. Such a prolonged denigration has compelled the natives to create more propitious self-representations. In this process the issue of an indigenous identity has become meaningful.

My research suggests that native Arubans are attempting to build cultural autonomy by astutely co-opting outside influences and playing them out in terms of their own social structures (a phenomena reported also among the Panare by Dumont 1978). This practice regulates and slows the direction of cultural change as the native Arubans make pragmatic choices about what to absorb or reject of invasive cultural flows. Referring to this process, in the competitive discourse of carnival the English-speaking Afro-Arubans charge that the Papiamentto-speaking native Arubans "are stealin' bits an' pieces of other cultures":

The Arubans have the habit of appropriating the customs of others, putting their stamp on it, and saying "its ours." They took the idea of carnival over from the British West Indians and said it was Aruban [Crispin Bruce]

and,

The natives are a proud people and they want to remain typical Aruban. Whatever comes into their sphere they will compound it or transform it to make something unlike what it was originally, and label it Aruban [Melrose Chase]

Such observations are well founded. Although many natives can recite a taxonomy of personality traits, traditions, and practices with are reputed to be native, a few of these are borrowed, adopted, or transformed from other ethnic groups through cultural adaptation. This is not so ethnocentric as it sounds given that production of native identity has always been characterized by the incorporation of cultural elements. Even in the 1960s, Vera Green noted that the Arubans adapted with "relative ease" as a result of the changes brought about by outside socio-economic factors, and the periodic settlement of foreigners (Green 1969:207-208).

#### A processual model of cultural identity

The concept of cultural identity developed in this study is one of process rather than structure. It combines both strategic essentialism and emergent forms of identification. My thinking on this issue has been inductively distilled from both my own past experiences of moving through time and place (described in chapter two,) and from observing the behaviors of my subjects that accord in some respects to my own practices, although there is a good deal of mirroring (reflexivity rather than reflection) between the two spheres of cognition. Crafting identity is necessarily political in the sense that external forces and agencies influence the choice of which elements are to be "featured or suppressed, promoted or ignored, sanctioned or censored" (Hymes in Fine and Speer 1992:16). Catherine Ewing refers to this process in her theory of multiple selves in which, she argues, that in all cultures people construct a series of self-representations that are based on selected cultural concepts of person and personal memories. Each self-concept is experienced as whole and continuous, with its own history and memories that emerge in a specific context, to be replaced by another self-representation when the context changes. Although particular self-representations may

be experienced and projected as whole and timeless, in fact they are fleeting (Ewing 1990:252-253).

In the development and structuring of communities and identities there is a propensity for stability and fixity. However, in Aruba, the need for external social, political and economic alliances mitigates against such stasis through the need for behavioral and psychological flexibility. Native identity then, is intersubjectively constructed and pragmatically re-constructed in the flow of social interaction. Tourism, continuing immigration, and globalization have introduced many cultural influences into the native population shaping new patterns of consumption and lifestyle. These events and processes have also been absorbed into the think and feel of native identity as part of the process of cultural adaptation.

Aruba's complex history and current societal configuration exemplifies Arjun Appadurai's concept of an *ethnoscape*, "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers and other moving groups and persons" which affects the politics of a place in significant ways (Appadurai 1990:7). For native Arubans sorting themselves as a group within a place of many others, many of whom share their essential somatic and linguistic aspects of self, has required them to develop a shifting taxonomy of identity, a contestable summary of the essential points of self. Shifting in the sense that the *ethnoscape* is changing fast and they must adapt. As actors we are constantly responding to changing circumstances by juxtaposing symbols from different domains (Ewing 1990:268).

#### Structure and process in native identity

I believe that the reproduction of native cultural identity in Aruba involves at least three distinct processes (Figure 6). The first entails the fashioning of a corpus of symbols created from a pool of biological, social, and material features. Michael Herzfeld has called this common practice "the essentializing process."<sup>xcii</sup> The second process occurs at the level of praxis in which individuals as self-interested actors consciously deploy aspects of the corpus through ephemeral masking in expressive performances and in social interaction with other groups, primarily, with the Dutch and with Spanish and American tourists. This process is analogous to Goffman's (1959) notion of role playing in everyday life, except that the features summoned in the fronting are ideational as well as behavioral. The third process pertains to the development and absorption of cultural patinas. These patinas are the by-product of ephemeral masking and from long-term social interaction with outsider-insiders and foreigners. These processes -- fashioning symbols, ephemeral masking, and absorbing the patina -- are located in two spheres of cognition which together form the native whole. A peripheral or outside layer of identity and a central core of nativeness (Figure 7). Although both parts incorporate and manipulate a variety of biological and sociocultural features, the periphery is proactive and radical whilst the core is relatively stable and conservative. The core of nativeness comprises a deeply stratified body of historic biological and sociocultural layering.

#### **Figs 6 and 7**

#### **Enter singing**

### Fashioning symbols, building culture

The essential features considered central to cultural identity are constituted in anthropological rather than juridical terms, and embodied within symbols, rather than rights. Pastiche and nostalgia are important modes used in the production of such symbols (Appadurai 1990:3). For the natives of Aruba, Indian heritage and the rural past are primary sites for crafting an indigenous self. A layer of self (the native core) that other Arubans do not share. In these terms, the formation of native identity is analogous to the process of poesis, a processual construction of self involving the elaboration of symbols. Some of these symbols are manifested in music and festival performances where they are over-determined and played with. Some of them are intrinsic to the native core and are performed in semi-private rituals such as the dande where we see the Arubans at their most unmasked.

Carnival is an especially teachable moment which some of the older native folk use to re-orient the younger generation towards their own culture, exemplified most emphatically by the carnival in Noord. Constructing native identity based on the traditional does not appear to hamper participation in the current trend towards globalization on Aruba, but tends to protect against the most damaging aspects of change. Deciding which aspects of history or folklore to elaborate during such performances is often determined by their degree of difference to other extant cultural forms (Hall 1991, 1990; Cohen 1985). Within the Aruban sphere, natives contrast themselves with the English, and with Spanish-speaking immigrants through a comparison of music genres, native languages, behavior, and somatic characteristics. In the international sphere, they similarly contrast themselves with those that have the potential to exert power over their destiny.

Symbols they use in this arena are those of Indianness, Papiamentu, ethos, and somatics. Aruba frequently contrasts the symbol of Indian heritage with neighboring Curacao's African heritage,<sup>xciii</sup> and with Holland and Latin America in terms of social behavior, values, and language. Whether such contrasts are made through a positive, negative or neutral frame depends on the referential context. In all of the contexts where these symbols are deployed, whether through discourse or in expressive performance, they have the potential to inform and orient native Islanders towards a respect for and celebration of their own culture. Taken together, these symbols effect a return to the native whole through their performance (Fernandez 1986).

The native Arubans are creating and re-creating themselves through relations of sameness and difference: "sameness" through the pragmatic formation of social alliance with other groups, and "difference" in the ephemeral construction of counter identities. In this sense, they are crafting themselves through and alterity. Michael Taussig suggests that "creating stability from this instability is no small task, yet all identity formation is engaged in this habitually bracing activity in which the issue is not so much staying the same, but maintaining sameness through alterity" (Taussig 1993:129).

Symbols or essentials of identity derive from two sources and I rank them as superordinate and subordinate, respectively. The first set derives from essential social and biological features drawn from their own hybrid culture. The second are a set of consciously or unconsciously usurped features of alien cultures. The only incontestable symbols of "essential" nativeness are found at the superordinate level. These are Indian blood, the Papiamentu language, specific somatic characteristics, a set of ideal behaviors and beliefs that exemplify the native ethos, land ownership, some local foods, and the dande. Indian heritage remains one of the most potent signifiers of indigeness. Even though Aruba did have a comparatively large Arawak Indian population,<sup>xciv</sup> it was long ago well mixed with European, and to a lesser extent, African

blood (Green 1974:35). The symbolic elaboration of the concept “Indian” grew as part of the Aruban separation movement from the Netherlands Antilles. The term was re-evaluated as a positive marker self and deployed as a means of differentiating themselves from the rest of the Dutch Antilles, especially from Curacao whose population is mainly of African descent. Within the native ethos, Indianness is a place in the heart. In the carnival, however, stereotypes play a central role in the constitution of Indian, images range from simple original Indians in buckskin, feathers and war paint, to glorified Aztecs in colorful costumes with sequins and feathers, accompanied by elaborate monumental architecture in the form of roadpieces.

Papiamentu is a composite of several languages, and a symbol of both national and native identity (Broek 1995, De Backer 1980, Hymes 1974, Wood 1969). Although it is spoken also on Curacao and Bonaire, it is differently and consciously nuanced between territories. The spelling systems are different between the Curacaon Papiamentu and the Aruban Papiamentu. Moreover, on Curacao, there are more Dutch words, and on Aruba there are more Spanish and English (Velasquez 1996).<sup>xcv</sup> The spelling is also different between the Islands. This is partly a reflection of the patterns of cultural contact the two Islands have had with Holland and Latin America, respectively. Since status Aparte, the two territories have consciously sought to increasingly differentiate the two dialects to reinforce their different populations, historical experiences, and political and cultural orientations: Curacao towards Holland and the Netherlands Antilles, and Aruba towards Latin-America and increasingly the United States.

A subtle (and not so subtle) set of somatic characteristics are used by native Arubans to signify who is native and who is not. While urban natives the median of somatic characteristics, some individuals exhibit higher levels of Indian or African biological traits (Rife 1972). Despite this, native Arubans characterize themselves as “white” with hair color ranging to Dutch blond to straight black Indian hair. Afro-Arubans are “black” with kinky hair. The ideal Aruban is represented as having light to white skin, sparse freckles, hazel eyes and Auburn hair (Kalm 1974:79). Within the native population itself, however, the “white” category is reserved for the self-definition of Sephardic descended “top ten” elite families even though most are brown skinned, with dark hair and eyes.

In chapter nine, a description of the New Year dande performances suggested that the native ethos is conveyed particularly through idealized social behaviors and good manners.<sup>xcvi</sup> These are expressed also in terms of difference and opposition to the character and personality traits of outsiders and outsider-insiders. For example, the Venezuelans and Spanish-speaking immigrants are “rude,” “aggressive,” and “egotistical,” while the native Arubans are “polite,” “modest,” and “acquiescent.” The Dutch are “authoritarian” and “rigid,” while they themselves are “co-operative” and “flexible.” The “English” are “disordered,” “immoral” and “vulgar,” while the natives are “organized,” “moral,” and “decorous.”<sup>xcvii</sup> The Curacaons are “aggressive” and “rough,” while the native Arubans are “polite” and “gentle” (an Indian attribute). The native Arubans prize (and share) certain values, including hospitality and humility, good manners, the obligations of kinship, a supportive community, loyalty, respect for old age, and the interdependence of the family.

As noted in chapter six, a particular attitude and legal relationship towards the land reveals other tropes. If an individual can prove that this or her forbears owned a piece of farmland, then they can claim to be a “real” Aruban family, in contrast to the more recent late nineteenth and early-twentieth century immigrants. The saying that one must go back into the cunucu to find the real Aruban is a common one (Green 1974:37, Phalen 1977:8). For most native Arubans, the cunucu resonates with emotion. It is an

ancient place, full of associations with Indian origins and myths about the past. Although little farming is done today, the old cunucu houses with their spiky cactus fences are still preserved and valued. Some local foods are said to have been handed down from the time of the Indians, for example, *Pan bati*, *funchi*, and *bonchi* (sorgum bread, corn pudding, beans). These are seen as “embodied” foods in the sense that preparing and consuming them reinforces a sensual conceptual continuum with the Indian ancestors.

The dande, discussed earlier in chapter nine, is one of the more potent signifiers of being indigenous, although it is debatable whether the genre is an “indigenous” or appropriated symbol. However, there is no doubt that it has been conceptually and functionally separated from its agualdo and Venezuelan origins for at least 180 years and therefore ought to be considered a super- rather sub-ordinate symbol of native cultural identity. It differentiates them from all non-natives (English, Migrants, Emigres), particularly urban from rural, tradition from modernity, Papiamento from English. It is used to eloquently elaborate the native ethos through its highly aestheticized performance, and to reinforce the concept and qualities of native identity.

Subordinate symbols are those that have been appropriated and adapted from elsewhere. These are used specifically to determine difference in relative terms with other Island groups, rather than in crafting self. These are deployed in different contexts and with different actors. These symbols are the Trinidad carnival and the Latin-American tumba. Although the carnival is “an Aruban thing,” the present form and structure was introduced from Trinidad, by the British West Indians. It has since been Arubanized with the incorporation of local elements and the original meaning of the Trinidadian masquerades re-glossed in native Aruban terms. Carnival today is used to highlight the boundary between native non-native, particularly through the tumba competition, and the tipico carnival groups. It is also used to differentiate themselves from the English through musical events (calypso and tumba), and contrast Aruba with Brazil, whose carnival is “vulgar” and “dangerous,” whilst theirs is *decente* and safe.

Incorporation may be subtle, for example, the tumba is only “native” to Aruba in relation to the outsider calypso. The tumba, part of the Afro-Latin generic rumba complex (like Papiamento) is of equal importance to Curacao and Bonaire, and other Circum-Caribbean territories, therefore, is not an exclusive Aruban symbol like the dande. However, it was adopted into the carnival for the sole purpose of “putting something native” into the carnival, something that was not “English,” even though it is not strictly Aruban either.

### Representing native in festival, music, and social discourse

Superordinate and subordinate symbols permeate social discourse, festival and music in Aruba. The effort to include symbols that are native rather than “foreign” alludes to the process of identity building. Tipico masquerades often mobilize symbols of an idealized rural past. These include portrayals of the Island’s landscapes, traditional cunucu houses, aloe farming equipment, folkloric festivities such as dera gai and the native dande music with its traditional instruments (tambor, cuarta, wiri, and violin).

Each form finds its appropriate place. The dande, as a New Year’s celebration, and one that takes place in the family home, is not a suitable genre for deployment in the carnival (although carnival groups do bring the dande as a theme in the parade). The tumba, as a form of secular party music was suitable however, and was not associated with the British Caribbean. Although the tumba is not an Aruban thing, it was introduced to balance the musical offerings of the season. The tumba festival takes place at the beginning of the carnival and chooses a song for the season. Although it is played

frequently on the radio, it is not played during the parades. This is for two reasons, first it is too fast for the carnavalistas to dance to, and second, it is the music that is used in the Curacao carnival, therefore, it has no potency as a symbol to differentiate between the Islands. However, on the radio, it can be experienced as the calypso is experienced, that is for listening rather than dancing. Interestingly modified (re-interpreted, re-embodied) to serve as a symbol in opposition to calypso today, the tumba's lyrics increasingly serve the same function as the latter. That is, they are a vehicle for satire and social commentary illustrated particularly well in the tumba "*djaka den Trampa*" excerpted in chapter eight. Together they function as a dyadic set, in both complementary and competitive terms. The calypso both represents and entertains the English-speaking Islanders, while the tumba is oriented in similar terms to the Papiamentu-speaking native-Islanders. In the area of social discourse, symbols of self and other are used in the ordering of Aruban society by the native Arubans themselves. The socio-cultural complexity of the Island is increasing as immigrants continue to settle (Spanish-speaking immigrants in particular). As the Island floods with these Others, the native Arubans, once again, feel compelled to differentiate themselves from them. This is proving a challenging task since the majority of the immigrants correspond physically to the Arubans which makes distinctions between them difficult. Although learning Papiamentu will allow them to assimilate well into Aruba's plural society, from the native point of view, the immigrants lack of any qualities that correspond to the native Aruban ethos will prevent their assimilation beyond the periphery of Aruban social sphere (even if they intermarry). After a period of enculturation, their mixed offspring have a better chance of being absorbed, as the background of many so-called native Arubans will attest.

#### From a static to a dynamic model of identity

In chapters five and six, I sorted the various Island population groups according to a set of categories that were aggregated on the basis of time of arrival, national origins, and somatic characteristics. My initial categories were "Aruban" and "non-Aruban," the latter category comprising the heterogeneous Migrant community. As a result of many interviews, I further subdivided the category "Aruban" into "native" and "non-native" (although both are juridically Aruban). The native Aruban population comprises individuals of Indian and European extraction (Sephardic, Dutch, Spanish, Arawak and some African) that was constituted during and before the nineteenth century. The non-native Arubans comprise Afro-Arubans who hail from English, French, or Spanish speaking parts of the Caribbean who arrived in Aruba in the first part of the twentieth century, and Emigres, who are Arubans of diverse ethnicities, including, Surinamers, East Indians, Lebanese, Ashkenazim, and Chinese who also arrived in the first half of the twentieth century.

In contrast to this structural, bounded and static model that I have used to delineate the social groups, the elaboration of categories of person that I found among the natives is shifting and contingent, and based upon symbols. The following interpretation of the Island's social structure derives from the native as opposed to the non-native Aruban or my outside view and itself reveals the symbolic quality of nativeness. These categories are based on the principle that native Islanders tend to sort individuals into groups according to their degree of "Arubanness" in native terms.

Individuals or groups of individuals are assigned a position (albeit a shifting, negotiable one) within a status hierarchy based on their sociobiological (somatic and socio-cultural features) distance from the native core. The degree of proximity to the pre-

eminent native status is defined by an abundance or deficiency of native characteristics. In this way, each group is assigned a position within the social hierarchy, each with some kind of boundary between themselves and others based on certain claimed or ascribed features. Non-native Islanders are acutely aware of this view, since this ordering implies a paramount status for natives. It is hard to say when such a taxonomy first emerged. We cannot know when the moment relative sentience began with respect to an autonomous native in Aruba, but presumably it has taken different forms over the centuries. After all, different peoples were incorporated into the native sphere at different times, and self-representations would have been modified to incorporate the signs, symbols, and practices of these immigrant-others.

This model from the native point of view locates individuals (initially but not ultimately) into one of three categories: outsiders, outsider-insiders, and insiders (shown in Figure 8). The Migrants are clearly “outsiders,” and would be considered so in any society. The Afro-Arubans and Emigres are thought of as “outsider-insiders.” Only the native Arubans are considered “insiders,” (Arubano autentico or “real” Arubans) by their own reckoning. Outsiders are half in and half out of the social sphere of Aruba (both conceptually and physically), but they are considered here because they provide a catalyst for the discussion of Island identities among Arubans, especially through the lyrics of carnival songs (see chapter nine). The outsiders occupy the periphery of society, the outsider-insiders occupy the middle layer, and the insiders occupy the central core.

### **Figure 8**

To be a citizen does not make one a native. In fact, my consultants from all social and ethnic groups thought it highly unlikely that outsider-insiders, like the Afro-Arubans or the Emigres could ever be socially absorbed deeply enough to pass into the native state. At least, not in the foreseeable future. I believe, however, that there is an ambiguous category of belonging which might be characterized as a “state of inclusiveness.” This is a liminal identity which situates a few non-native individuals on the boundary between the periphery and center of nativeness. This “honorary native” status is achieved through a possessed combination of essential and acquired traits. Essential traits include valued somatic characteristics such as a light skin, hair and eyes; while acquired traits comprise an ability to speak and use Papiamentu well, and to exhibit a general ethos that is deemed native in local terms. The latter is constituted around a set of social manners associated with a gentle demeanor, respectfulness, friendliness, reciprocity and loyalty (exemplified in the dande). Individuals from the rest of the Dutch Antilles (Saba, St Maarten, St Eustatius, Bonaire, and Curacao) have the potential to occupy this category together with some Emigre Arubans on a case-by-case basis.

### **An argument of symbols**

Since the time of first contact between the Caiquetio and Jirajara Arawaks and the Spanish, and through ensuing periods of alien settlements, an increasingly complex and deeply stratified identity has formed. Even though I have shown that the terms “indigenous” and “native” are relative and nebulous terms on Aruba, there is a palpable

sense of cultural identity that inheres in the native population. As suggested above, it is more implied than asserted, more fluid than fixed, but sentient nevertheless. It comprises a potpourri of diverse biological and cultural elements in which Spanish, Dutch, Sephardic and African leave only the faintest scents as they mingle with the Arawaks within the native core. These elements remain sentient and accessible and are used pragmatically in a continuous and reflexive manner in dealing with daily life.

Native Arubans today appear especially adept at positioning themselves with a diversity of incomers using what they learn from one faction to deal with another. This may be observed in different social situations. Again, the various symbols that denote "Indian," "Dutch," "Spanish," or "Sephardic" may be summoned in the construction of social masks. This art enables them to manage relations with outsiders through the convergence of self and other selves. In the short term these native Aruban ephemeral masquerades exemplify the human propensity for social code switching. Over the longer term, they comprise the very stuff of native cultural adaptation. No particular set of features displays for long. Thus, observations such as "they are really just a bunch of Venezuelans," or "they are Indian," or "they are Dutch," and remarks like "they manage the Island with the astuteness of their Jewish ancestors," are all understandable objectifications in specific contexts. To such observations, the natives tend to respond with comments such as:

Well, we are not like any of them in particular, but we do have them in us. That is how we are able to deal with them. We can protect ourselves from them if we have to because what we recognize in them, we also hold inside ourselves [Bibi Arends].

However, developing a coherent complex of symbols of identity presents the native Arubans with an interesting paradox. These symbols are rooted in a tangled web of biological and cultural connections to all the other Island groups from whom they are attempting to differentiate themselves. For example, although native Arubans carry African blood (Rife 1972), such an aspect of self cannot be presented as a symbol of identity because the denial of connection is itself a marker of difference between the two groups. Individuals will downplay elements of identity they have absorbed where these possess negative connotations. Thus, any inherited Latin-American characteristics which have been absorbed by blood or prolonged social interaction with the Venezuelans (among others) are denied because such features are used as negative markers of Latin-Americanness. In both conscious and unconscious ways native Arubans have appropriated the other without necessarily giving recognition to this fact. Those symbols of self which are perceived as positive are recognized as borrowed, but not without their (often obfuscating) recontextualization.

## **1. Receiving a gift of song**

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### Reflections on a partial ethnography

A quarter of a century later, on  
my eighth fieldwork trip into Kwaio country,  
chewing betel nut and squatting around  
a fire reflecting ... I was still all I will ever be:  
an outsider who knows something of what it is  
to be an insider [Keesing 1992:77].

This dissertation marks an arbitrary moment of time in a study that continues to unravel the conundrum of culture on the Caribbean Island of Aruba. Major questions emerged from the fieldwork. How does a native population with a hybrid culture cohere as a cognitive whole within a place of many others? Why and how is this separate category of person constituted. And, how is this process operationalized? In seeking to answer these questions, I have been tacking back and forth between the expressive performances of festival and music to the discourses and practices of everyday life. That is, between fixity and flow, respectively. The interpretation of identity I present here derives from the specific individuals, materials, and events the work has engaged. Had such interactions been with a different aggregate of people, texts, and contexts, this exegesis would vary in some respects; not least because opinions and perspective vary among these sources of information. The production of this ethnography, therefore, ought to be attributed to a "we" rather than an "I" or a "they" reflecting the fluid, contextual, and contestable nature of knowledge.

With all her historical and contemporary demographic changes, Aruba has provided a valuable social domain in which to study the processes of adaptation and change. I have demonstrated a few of the ways in which cultural identity is both consciously and unconsciously crafted among natives. Although the evolution of this identity is not (and never will be) complete, there are moments of fixity within the flow which have provided me with frames to study and interpret. These "pauses" in the cultural process are made visible in the big performances of carnival and in the New Year's celebration of dande. I found other reflections of nativeness also in the social discourses surrounding ideas of place and the critique of the colonial Dutch education system.

Although not seeking a full independence from Holland for a variety of pragmatic reasons Aruba's goal is to achieve as much cultural, economic and political autonomy as possible. As native Arubans attempt to construct the cultural future of their Island in their own terms and language, they are struggling with the effects of increasing transnational flows. Aruba is not likely to close her borders any time soon to stem the current trends of homogenization and globalization (Appadurai 1991, 1990; Friedman 1994). Thus, although the Island remains subject to the same forces that have shaped her past, ironically it is the experiences of the past that have given Arubans the ability to adapt in ways that bring some control to the inevitable process of cultural change. I surmise that native identity will to continue to shape itself in the manner which has served it so well in the past -- by absorbing, borrowing, rejecting, or transforming external lifestyles, values, and cultural forms in pragmatic ways. The self-protective, proactive, and processual nature of it is suggested in the following astute remark made by a native friend:

I think cultural flexibility is part of our identity. I visualize our society as a stew pot. With a melting pot you do not recognize the ingredients. The stew pot you do

recognize the ingredients. But which flavor dominates more, depends on the specific cook, the policy makers, or those who have influence [Pancho Geerman].

### Hypothesis

The mechanisms through which native Arubans culturally adapt to change is relevant to a theoretical understanding of the processes of change in all societies as they engage with an increasingly interconnected world. Understanding how identities are formed and deployed in real time, and over time, on Aruba leads me to hypothesize that short-term exposure and adaptation to new socio-cultural spheres of influence, or longer term cultural change, inevitably involves a partial unlearning of the self in order to learn the new. Native Arubans look both forwards and backwards in the creation of culture. Symbols are chosen or jettisoned from the past based on their facility to protect and maintain valued aspects of extant culture and are sometimes adapted and intermixed with the orienting symbols of specific desired futures. Although what has been jettisoned or lost in Aruba can never be fully known, my consultants implied that much is lost and unretrievable either by choice or lack of use. Those aspects that are discarded or become quiescent in social contexts are possibly those that constrain the ability to interact successfully or adapt. Conversely, those parts that are retained may likely include the essential characteristics of self that are needed to manage the pragmatics of social interaction and those which provide a continuum of wholeness (Ewing 1990).

The practice of ephemeral masking at the periphery to protect the center, however, presents a paradox. Those with whom the natives interact with will have the greatest influence on the future shape of native identity. Through repeated social interactions, they will leave a "cultural patina" upon the natives, a patina which will be gradually absorbed, voluntarily or involuntarily, into the native core (much like picking up an accent). In the past and over a period of time, as new waves of immigrants have arrived and settled, the Arubans have built up and absorbed their patinas through interaction and intermarriage. This has contributed to the complexity and ambiance of the native core that we see among the Arubans today. Although this continuous process of sociocultural adaptation is managed with varying degrees of success by peoples everywhere, I believe that native Arubans have mastered these cultural acrobatics to a level of efficiency that has allowed them to survive some pivotal periods of demographic and economic change. This has also enabled them to maintain a distinct (albeit hybrid) group identity in a territory inhabited also by many "others." What then, given these realities, does it mean to be a "real" or "authentic" Aruban when such an identity is (over time) fleeting and virtual? In fact, can we even entertain the notion of an authentic, or real, identity for anyone? (Adams 1996). Seen from this perspective, then, in its aspect of a masquerade of representations, carnival has turned out to be an apt metaphor for the ephemeral native Aruban identity, and perhaps for the human condition as a whole.

## APPENDIX 1 -- Carnival chronology

- 1944 Around Christmastime in San Nicolas, a group of Trinidadians with their own musical band, parade outside in the neighborhood of Lago Heights (C. Figaroa, L. Kelly, A. van der Linde, M. Maduro, J. Nava, M. Oduber, F. Refuniol, J. Wever, G. de Silva, n.d. Archivo Biblioteca Nacional). Also eye witness accounts, but no other written, or photographic evidence to date. On February 18th, 19th and 20th: Tivoli Club holds private indoor carnival to raise funds for a new clubhouse (Curacao Amigoe February 18th, 1944).
- 1945 Leonard Turner and 40 or 50 fellow Trinidadians arrive on Aruba (Aruba Esso News February 27th, 1953). Turner must be credited with introducing the steel band to Aruba. While working for Lago in San Nicolas, he formed the Island's first steelband the Invaders after the Trinidad band of the same name. On May 7<sup>th</sup> (Victory over Europe Day) carnival starts spontaneously when everyone goes into the streets to celebrate. There is a large costumed carnival parade in San Nicolas.
- 1946 First carnival in Trinidad since the beginning of the Second World War.
- 1946 The earliest photographic evidence of a public carnival parade in Aruba is for March 3<sup>rd</sup> when the Aruba Tivoli Club carnival parades around streets of Oranjestad in decorated trucks. Tivoli's carnival queen is Edith Arends (Photo taken on Hendrikstraat, Oranjestad). On August 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, the Dutch Queen's birthday is celebrated at the Lago Heights Club, San Nicolas. The following was noted in the Aruba Esso News September 21st, 1946: "There was also a special prize awarded to a group of 33 Arab Slaves led by Robert Murray ... Exotic though they may be, these Egyptian slaves are just plain Lago men; they are celebrating the Queen's birthday in their own inimitable style. These groups, which ordinarily range from 80 to 100 in size had their origin in Trinidad where as many as 90 groups do various masques at carnival time ... This particular group of Egyptian slaves, led by Robert Murray, won first prize of the groups in Oranjestad on August 31st."
- 1947 In February, Calvin Assang and small group of fellow Trinidadians obtained permission to parade around the vicinity of Lago Heights to celebrate carnival. They were costumed as Arab Sheiks.
- 1948 In Trinidad, the fifty-five gallon gasoline oil drum replaces the earlier pans made from biscuit tins, paint cans, dustbins and cement drums (Hill 1972:48-51). On February 7th and 9th, the Falcon Club and the Swingsters Square Gardens of San Nicolas hold pre-Lenten carnivals, featuring Leonard Turner's Invaders steelband (Aruba Esso News February 27th, 1948). In February Calvin Assang and his carnival group "King Ramos and His Followers," receive a permit to parade publicly in San Nicolas.
- 1949 In February the Tivoli Club holds a costumed carnival parade in the streets of Oranjestad. Tivoli Carnival Queen is Julia Porry.

- 1950 On May 6<sup>th</sup> the original Invaders steel band from Trinidad, visits Aruba and plays at the Lago Club, San Nicolas (Aruba Esso News photograph). Invaders leave some pans in a yard in the vicinity of the Springfield Supermarket, San Nicolas. Edgar Connor and Naldo and Jill Brown recover the pans and teach themselves to play. Leonard Turner (nick-named Shoo-Shoo Baby) forms another steelband Shoo-Shoo Baby and the Aruba All-Star Boys (photograph, Aruba Esso News February 27<sup>th</sup>, 1953). Naldo Brown, Jill Brown, and Edgar Connor play with this band.
- 1951 On February 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> the Surinam and Santa Cruz Social Clubs hold carnivals. The Lieutenant Governor of Aruba crowns Santa Cruz carnival queen (Aruba Esso News Vol 12, n.d.).
- 1952 Edgar Connor leaves the Aruba All-Stars to form his own steelband -- the Aruba Invaders -- (named after Turner's band, and the original Trinidad band). Connor's Invaders is considered the finest steelband on Aruba. Aruba sends queen candidates to Curacao to compete for title of Carnival Queen of Netherlands Antilles. The winner (from Curacao) competes in Havana, Cuba for title of International Carnival Queen (Aruba Esso News February 9<sup>th</sup>). Ten queen candidates attend the Santa Cruz Social Club carnival celebrations. People from St Martin and Martinique gathered together for a French carnival at the Netherlands Windward Islands Club, San Nicolas (Aruba Esso News February 15<sup>th</sup>). The Carnival Queen of the Eagle Oil Company Workers Club, parades through Aruba with her group on February 23<sup>rd</sup> (Aruba Esso News March 28<sup>th</sup>).
- 1953 Leonard Turner's Aruba All-Star Boys steel band plays for graduation night at the Latin Dance Class (Aruba Esso News January 30<sup>th</sup>).
- 1954 Naldo Brown takes over the All Stars Steelband which features Aruba's first calypso singer, Charles "Lord Cobashi" Groeneveldt. In February, Club Antilliana joins Tivoli Club in a public carnival parade in Oranjestad. On November 23<sup>rd</sup> after three meetings at the Tivoli Club initiated by Eric Arends, the Temporary Aruba Carnival Committee of Aruba is formed. Temporary chairperson is Tivoli Club member, Gustavo A. Oduber.
- 1955 In February, the Central Carnival Committee of Aruba is formed. Its first chairperson is Casper "Cappy" Lacle. The CCCA organizes the first coordinated public carnival on Aruba which brings together several existing carnival groups. These are the Tivoli Club, Club Antilliana, Club Caribe, Falcon Club, Surinam, Santa Cruz Social Club, Netherlands Windward Islands Association, French Club, and the Bonaire Club. In February, out of 120 contestants Island-wide, the first official Carnival Queen (Ms. Eveline Croes, Tivoli Club Queen), was crowned in Lago Sport Park, San Nicolas (Aruba Esso News February 26<sup>th</sup>). Casper E. "Cappy" Lacle is elected as Aruba's first carnival prince and Morris "Pancho" Neme is elected first Carnival Fool. Subsequent fools are named "Pancho" after Neme's chosen sobriquet "Pancho Morris." Pancho was also Neme's Aruban nick-name.
- 1956 Aruba's second carnival queen is Olga Tromp of the Aruba Social Club. She was crowned in Wilhelmina Stadium, Oranjestad. Queen elections are held in Oranjestad for all subsequent years. The custom of having two organized grand

carnival parades begins in this year. The first is held in San Nicolas on Saturday, and the second on Sunday in the capital Oranjestad.

- 1958 First carnival group to be brought by a native Aruban. Group is called “Fiesta Brava” and led by Cedonia Meuller.
  
- 1964 Youth Carnival Committee is formed. First president is Edison Croes. Current (1996) president, Modesto Ruiz, was a member of this original committee. The Island's first Youth Queen is Jolanda Coutinho of the Tanki Leendert Youth Center. First Youth Prince and Pancho are Antonio (Nito). Erasmus as Prince Colon (colon) and Jossy Tromp as Pancho Barigon (big belly). First Calypsonian contest is held. Competing are Aruba's first calypso singer Lord Cobashi (Charles Groeneveldt) and King Paul (Paul Connor).
  
- 1965 King Paul is elected Aruba's first Roadmarch King with his winning song “Pork for Sale.”
  
- 1966 The Aruba Carnival Foundation SAC (Stichting Arubaanse Carnival) is established. Its first chairperson is Milo Croes.
  
- 1971 The Tumba competition is introduced into carnival festivities. First Tumba King is Casin Giel with “Temporada di Carnaval.”
  
- 1981 February 14<sup>th</sup>, the Tivoli Club holds its first Tivoli Lighting Parade. With the exception of 1982 carnival season, it has continued successfully to the present time.
  
- 1992 The town of Noord introduces an early morning jump-up, the Cocoyoco “Rooster” Jam, as the native counterpart to the English Jouvert Morning in San Nicolas. The carnival calendar of Aruba now features over 50 separate events.

## APPENDIX II -- Glossary of terms

Aguinaldo: Religious folksong of Spanish origin based on texts praising Jesus, the saints, or the angels, sung throughout Latin America. Prevailing structure is a simple melodic structure following a conventional pattern of refrain (*estribillo*), stanza (*copla*), and refrain. Also called *alabanza*, *adoracion*, and *villancico*.

Aguinaldo de Parrande: In Venezuela, a group of amateur musicians parading around the streets between December 16th and New Years Day singing aguinaldos and Christmas carols. Instruments include Cuatro, guitar, maracas, pandero, furruco, and arpa.

Bruha: Local form of *obeah*, a widespread medicinal system in the Caribbean based on West African traditional therapeutic practices.

Burriquita: "Little donkey" masquerade from the Venezuelan carnival, imported into the Trinidadian and early Aruban carnivals. The masquerade comprises a paper donkey which fits around the dancer's hips to give the illusion he or she is riding the animal. The framework is made of wood, wire, and cardboard, covered with a bright skirt of color fabrics, with a hemp tail. The dancer wears a satin shirt, and a large brimmed hat, and gallops, brays, and does all those things appropriate to the donkey. La Burriquita is accompanied by musicians playing guitar, quatuos, and shac-shacs.

Cachu: A wind instrument of great antiquity made from a cow's horn. The *cachu* is played at harvest festivals, and was once used to proclaim births and deaths on the Dutch Caribbean Islands.

Calco, karko: a conch shell, and a wind instrument made out of this shell.

Calypso: Verse and chorus in modern song form, accompanied by dance band ensemble. In Trinidad, calypsos are performed in tents erected prior to carnival by competing singers. Songs are satirical, social and political commentary, and about love, scandal, and history. Commonly referred to as "the peoples newspaper," the calypso best illustrates the blending of African and European traditions in the Caribbean, and dates from the time of

### Glossary of terms

manumission. Slaves made up critical songs about local and topical events and figures to do with the emancipation movement and their oppressors. In Trinidad, group of slaves led by a singer-composers known as "chantwells" paraded through the streets in carnival season. The calypso was introduced into Aruba by Trinidadian immigrants, and it has remained close to its roots.

Canboulay: A carnival parade originating from the practice of forcing slaves to extinguish fires on the cane plantations. They carried torches, sang, and marched to the fields in what became known as the burning of the cane or

*cannes brulees*. This was later parodied in carnival by the freed blacks but eventually banned because of its violent nature.

Carnavalista: a costumed carnival player in Aruba.

Chapi: The head of a garden hoe commonly used as a percussion instrument. Held in one hand with the thumb through the handle cavity, it is struck with a single iron rod rhythmically. This instrument is used in Aruban Asambeho music, and in *tambu* music, a drum and song festival that is part of the New Year celebrations in the ABC Islands.

Claves: One pair of cylindrical wooden sticks that are used as a percussion instrument.

Cocoyoco (Rooster) Jam: A native version of Jouvert Morning. An early morning jump-up with soca bands in the district of Noord that heats up revelers for the Noord children's carnival.

Comparsas: (masquerade) Choreographed or free style street dance processions typical of the pre-Lenten season (Cuba, Venezuela). During carnivals, masked or costumed players dance behind roadmarch bands, steelbands, brassbands, dance bands, or mobile discos (sound systems).

Cuarta: (Sp. *cuatro*) A four stringed descendant of the guitar, common in Latin America.

Cunucu, kunucu, koenoekoe: from the Indian term *conoco* which in colonial days referred to the plot of land which a slave was allowed to cultivate his/her own crops. Later, formerly implied "field," then "vegetable garden," and, more recently, "plantation." Today it is generally used to indicate districts outside the built-up areas. *Cunucu* literally means: outdoors, country house (Folkert Steenmeijer, *Food and Nutrition of Arubans*, Utrecht: Schotanus and Jens. 1957, page 17). In Santo Domingo, *conucos* are plots of land farmed by landless peasants belonging to absentee landlords, or the government.

Dande: New Year's celebration, unique to Aruba, in which a group of traveling musicians visit the homes of relatives and friends with a gift of song. According to Ito Tromp of the National Library of Aruba, the word "dande" comes from the old Papiamentu word *dandara* -- now *parandia* or *parandea* -- which mean to go on a spree or revel (Papiamentu/Ingles Dikshonario. Betty Ratzlaff (1992). Ephrata, PA: TWR Dictionary Foundation). However, the dande is also characterized as a "gift." Some related words in Spanish are: *dante*: he who gives, giving; *dar*: to give; *donante*: donor, giver; *donador*: bestower of gifts.

Dera gai: *Dera gai* means "to bury the rooster." The custom of burying a rooster is associated with two distinct festivals -- the feast days of St Peter and St John.

Madur  
o  
believes the that the rooster symbolizes cock that crowed times when St Peter

r  
e

Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Feast of St Peter used to be celebrated on

29, but was amalgamated with the feast of St John in the last century. An

between St John, and the [now banned] Aruban custom of first burying, and then decapitating the unfortunate rooster, is made through the story of Salome, who requested the head of John the Baptist on a platter as a reward for her dancing. The extant custom of lighting fires on the eve of San Juan originated from the pagan festival of the summer solstice. In their worship of the sun, ancient peoples developed many beliefs about Midsummer's Eve. They built bonfires for the sun, danced, and leapt through the flames, and saved the ashes as charms against disease and witchcraft. The church gave new meaning to the fires by asserting that because Jesus had called John a burning and shining light, the fires would celebrate St John, and not the sun.

Dimanche Gras: (Fat Sunday) Sunday evening carnival parade in Trinidad that features final King/Queen competitions.

Divi-divi or Watapana tree: (*caesalpinia goriaria*) Tree found in the Dutch Leeward and Windward Islands. Branches grow away from the prevailing wind. Once cultivated for its tannin content.

Furruco: (*zambomba*) a friction drum Venezuelan type. Head is pierced with a stick, reed, or string, which is rubbed up and down through the skin to produce a resonant, hoarse, squeaking sound.

Guira: an oval gourd.

Gaita: A generic term for pipes. 1. Spain: bagpipe, hornpipe, double-reed instruments. 2. Portugal: panpipes and double-reeded instruments. 3. Brazil:

small bamboo or metal flute, sanfona.

Guitar seis: (*guitarra*; *guitara*) Spanish, six stringed, plucked chordophone.

Guitar tres: short-necked Cuba-style guitar with three sets of double strings.

Hub-cap: The hub cap from a motor vehicle used as a metal percussive instrument. Accompanies steelbands and brassbands, in particular.

Junkanoo/Jonkonnu: Also known as Gombey in Bermuda. Origins: English folk theater, mummers plays, (Jack Pudding, Merry Andrew, court and military characters), and African masquerades (cow head, horse-head). Christmas season in British Caribbean territories: Turks and Caicos, the Bahamas, Belize, St. Kitts, Nevis, Jamaica, Bermuda, etc. Junkanoo, John Canoe, John Conny, *dzong kunu* (terrible sorcerer). Characterized by wearing a ship or house upon his head, white-faced or wire screen mask, dressed in rags, ribbons, bells, mirrors, and feathers. African rhythms and flute music. Jonkonnu music is fife and drum music, and includes a bamboo fife, a bass and rattling drum, a banjo, and a grater.

Jouvert, Jouvay: ( *jour ouvert*, the day opens) An early morning jump-up with soca bands in the streets of San Nicolas to heat up the carnival revelers for the grand parade. Takes place the Saturday before Lent.

Kalenda, kalinda: songs sung by chantwell and chorus with drums and/or tamboo-bamboo stamping tubes. Music to accompany quarter-staff dueling, backed by followers at carnival. Drum beats act as lead in foot work and feigned attacks.

Krewes: Private carnival clubs that organize costumed groups for Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

Liming: A Trinidadian word associated with social gatherings involving food and drink.

Maracas: Gourd rattle originally from South American Indians, held by its natural handle and filled with dried seeds or pebbles. In Cuba the maraca is made of the guira gourd where twin or multiple maracas occur, with some in the shape of a dumbbell or cruciform.

Marimba: (Bantu) A xylophone of Southern Africa and South America. Strips of wood in different lengths with resonators beneath each bar, and laid across two parallel struts.

Marimbula: Resonating box with plucked metal keys used as a bass instrument. An enlarged version of African thumb piano, or mbira. Marimbula is the Cuban name for this instrument. Called a *bass-en-boite* (bass in a box) in Trinidad. Made of strips of metal of different lengths fixed to a sound board and twanged with the fingers. In Aruba this instrument takes the place of the double bass, especially among dande groups, They are made from a large wooden box with metal strips laid over a surface opening. The player may sit on the box while

playing.

Mas: Trinidadian term that refers to the masquerade costumes and their performance. and to the carnival festival itself. A mas player is a costumed participant.

Glossary of terms

Mas band: Group of people (sometimes several hundred) who enter the carnival parade in costumes.

Matrimonial: Instrument consisting of a wooden board with four long nails. A pair of round metal discs are attached to each nail which act as cymbals. The board is struck across the knees with a rocking motion that produces a jingling sound and rhythm.

Merengue, meringue: Music and dance of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in which one foot is dragged on every step. Merengue is popular in Aruba.

Moco Jumbie: Caribbean name for a carnival stilt dancer derived from various African masquerades.

Mumming: British folk theater from the middle ages. Includes various rhymed plays acted by groups of traveling actors (Santino 1995:150). More generally, it refers to parading in the streets and to go about merrymaking in disguise during festivals. The equivalent to this traditions in the Caribbean and Latin America are the *comparsas*, choreographed or free style dance parades performed by costumed masqueraders during the Christmas and pre-Lenten seasons, especially in the Santiago carnival, Cuba (Manuel 1995). In Venezuela, the *comparsas* and *parrandas* the maskers intend to entertain with dances and practical jokes and collect money, food, and drinks (Pollak-Eltz 1983).

Negue jardin: Carnival masquerade whose costume parodies the clothing of garden or house slaves.

Obeah: Widespread medicinal system in the Caribbean based on traditional West African therapeutic practices.

Old Mask parade: A jump-up with music. In Trinidad mas players wear ragged costumes and act out satirical skits. In Aruba, these are non-costumed jump-ups held in most districts to heat up the people for the season.

Pandereta: Tambourine, timbrel.

Papiamento/u": Papiamento (Papiam, Papiaments, Papiamentu) a Spanish Creole derived from an earlier Portuguese pidgin, much influenced lexically by Dutch. The word "Papiamento" is derived from the Portuguese verb *papear*, to talk (Gastmann 1978:131). Spoken in three main dialects. The term Papiamento signifies talk, or conversation and is derived from *palabramentum* -- *palabra* being the Spanish for word (Gatschet 1885:304). The spelling of Papiamento/u has evolved two systems: phonological for Curacao, and etymological for Aruba.

In addition, the two lexicons vary according to their cultural orientations. For example, Curacao's closer relationship with Holland has resulted in a higher preponderance of Dutch words, while Aruba's historic affinity to the South American mainland reflects in the higher proportion of Spanish lexical items. The rhythm and texture of the spoken language also differs between the two language populations.

Paranda: To spree or revel.

Parrandas: Jovial feast or party; group of amateur musicians (*parranderos*) who go out at night playing and singing to amuse themselves. In Cuba, the neighborhood *parranda* are groups of musicians and singers. The *parranderos* in various neighborhoods of Havana used to competitively decorating church facades and carry small floats in the streets on Christmas Eve.

Raspa: (scrape, scratch) The *raspa* is also a *wiri*, but this alternate nomenclature developed in colloquial use to differentiate those made of cow horn, wood, or plastic, from those made of monel steel. Further, the *raspa* is played with a metal comb (*pena*). The sound is softer than the metal *wiri*, and takes up a slightly different rhythm.

Rattles: Common throughout the Caribbean and Latin America. Most are made from gourds with dried seeds inside. Maracas are the most widely used form of rattle.

Refresqueria: Small shop selling snacks and drinks.

Reggae: Form of protest music with links to Rastafarianism. Many songs are local, and topical to Jamaica. It is Jamaican folk music. Mixture of African rhythms (call and response of communal singing, work songs) and European melody and harmony.

Rumba: Part of the Afro-American lexicon including *tumba*, *macumba*, or *tambo*. Music that denotes a party ambience. Also refers to a ballroom dance of Cuban origin with a basic pattern of step-close-step and marked by a delayed transfer of weight and pronounced hip movements.

Roadmarch: A lively soca with simple words and beat, designed to provide dance music for jump-ups and parades during the carnival season. The melody and tempo are more important than the lyrics. Has a chorus that revelers can join in with. Roadmarch calypsos often contain lyrics that call for a physical action response, for example, put your hands in the air, slide and duck, jump back, and shake your hips.

Scrapers: There are African and native-Caribbean examples of these. A gourd with its natural stem forming a handle with notches cut in its surface and scraped with a stick, is from Africa. A turtle shell cut into ridges and scraped is Caribbean.

Shac-shacs: (shack-shacks, shak-shaks, chac-chacs) of African origin, it is a gourd filled with seeds, dried peas, etc, shaken with rhythm against the hand.

To effect a more complex cadence, they are often wrapped with a loosely woven web of strung glass beads.

**Soca:** Soul-calypso music and rhythm, a ubiquitous music found throughout the Caribbean. Representing the blending of Caribbean cultures, *soca* combines jazz, calypso, and North-American soul music.

**Steelband:** Introduced into Aruba in the late 1940s. Originated in 1930s in Trinidad after police banned the use of bamboo-bamboo canes as offensive weapons. In 1941, most carnival parade music was provided by biscuit drum and dustbin orchestras. More sophisticated steel instruments were developed from oil drums discarded by the refinery. These were cut into “pans” of various depths, tempered, beaten to raise bosses of different notes, and played by striking them with a stick wrapped with rubber. The different pan sizes are: the bass, tenor, alto, and ping-pong (or, boom, cellopan, guitar, and ping-pong). The Steel Band was widely popular in the Caribbean by 1945 and introduced into Aruba in 1946.

**Tamboo-Bamboo band:** West African origins. Bamboo claves of different lengths struck together. In Trinidad, before the advent of the steelband, very large bamboo claves of different lengths were developed to be struck on the road to accompany performers. A bamboo-bamboo band consisted of bamboo stems of three sizes (a five foot *boom* or *bass*, two one foot *foules* struck together, and a *cutter*, a thin bamboo held over the shoulder and struck with a piece of wood), a bottle partly filled with water and beaten with a spoon, and a metal scraper, scraped with a piece of metal.

**Tambor:** Kettledrum. The *tambor* is a small wooden drum, sometimes made from a wine cask, covered on both sides with goat or sheep skin. The drum is hung from a neck-strap. One side is played with a stick covered with cloth or felt, and the other is played with the hand. The *tambor* is the central instrument in dande music.

**Tambora:** Two-headed drum constructed from a hollowed tree trunk. It is considered the national instrument of the Dominican Republic. Traditionally, a male goatskin is used for the top of the drum, and a female one for the bottom. These are mounted on three hoops and held in place by additional sets of hoops tied to the body with a cord. The drum is played with the palm and finger of the left hand and with a *palito* (small stick) held in the right hand.

**Tambour:** generic word for drum, especially, snare drum, tambourine, or kettle drum.

**Tambu drum:** Also called a *bari* (drum) or *cuero* (skin). The *tambu* is covered with skin on one side only, and played with the hands. The *tambu* is carried under the arm so as to allow playing while walking, or placed between the knees while playing in a stationary position.

**Tambu dance and music:** The *tambu* dance is a “very hot belly dance.” The music is played with a *tambu*, *chapi*, and a *wicharo*, and is accompanied with rhythmic hand clapping, and provocative dancing.

Tambu songs: Bittersweet music of Curacao (also known in Aruba) in which a strummed four-stringed guitar (cuatro) accompanies songs in Papiamentu. The lyrics are improvised (sung extempore) and relate to community scandals and gossip. Used for the public admonishment of wrongdoers. Formerly, verses contained rough and obscene language. Now toned down.

Tambue: (lion) Friction drum of the Luba of the Congo named for the roar of a lion.

Tambura: Kettledrum, also classical drone lute of India similar to the sitar.

Tamburo: Kettledrum, drum.

Tambourine: A small, shallow single-head drum with loose metal discs inserted around the edges, played by striking with the hand, or shaking.

Tanki: Earthen reservoirs or pits to catch rainfall.

Tumba: Part of the generic rumba complex. Tumba is part of an Afro-American lexicon including rumba, macumba, tambo, etc., A general type of secular party music. Over many years this music achieved the status of an independent genre, with its own style and instrumental formats for interpretation. It even developed its own instruments such as tumbadoras, or conga drums (Farel Johnson, 1990:68). Also, a song and dance genre of Franco-Italian immigrants to eastern Cuba.

Tumba: Aruban dance and music (Mansur 1991). Ballroom dance that resembles the rumba and the cha-cha, with strong emphasis on the hips. Also refers to the music for this dance.

Tumba: (tambor) Drum of African origin. Afro-Cuban drum, single-headed, played only in East Cuba. Varieties of this drum include the tumba francesa which accompanies the Haitian Creole dances. Made of palm tree trunk and tuned by heat, tumba drums are vertical with one head, but assume a variety of body shapes.

Tumbadoras: (or tumbas) Conga drums which evolved into three barrel shaped *tumbas*: the *hembra* (female) the *macho* (male), and the *quinto* (fifth).

Tumbandera: Ground bow of Cuba.

Tumbano: Modern Greek for drums.

Tingilingi box: Also known in Aruba as: *caha di orgel* (organ box), *caha di musika*, and *doshi di alegria* (small box of gaiety). The Tingilingi box is a barrel organ originally from Spain and Italy, that was introduced into Aruba about 100 hundred years ago from Venezuela. Music is generated by turning wooden cylinders, stuck with steel pins, that strike against a bed of steel strings. The particular pattern of the pins in each cylinder plays a specific melody.

Vera: a perforated tin cylinder scraped with a piece of wire.

Vodoun: Religion with African roots mixed with Catholicism, practiced mainly in Haiti.

Wiri, Wicharo, quiro: (Sp. guiro, guira) Percussion instrument of Latin-American origin (Brazil, Cuba, Mexico) made of a serrated (notched) guira gourd, and played by scraping a stick along its surface. On Aruba, the wiri was originally made from a gourd or cowhorn, but the steel (monel alloy) wiri took over 100 years ago. Played with a single metal rod, a *wicharon*, the wiri keeps the rhythm and the time.

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<sup>i</sup> According to Betty Sedoc-Dahlberg "no comprehensive study of the contemporary

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Dutch Caribbean has been conducted" and that the Netherlands Antilles in particular has been either "routinely excluded" or treated "only marginally." In addition, work that has been done has been published mainly in the Dutch language, and few Dutch scholars have made serious efforts to participate in academic endeavors outside the region (Sedoc-Dahlberg 1990:1).

<sup>ii</sup> Although I had lived on Aruba between 1981 and 1982, I had gone as a traveler, and had not explored the society to any great depth.

<sup>iii</sup> In order to immerse myself in the culture of carnival, I became a maker and player of masquerade. I helped to make costumes, and joined groups in parades both as a carnavalista and in a support role by carrying food and drink to the masqueraders.

<sup>iv</sup> According to Dennis Tedlock, analogical anthropology involves the replacement of one discourse for another, while dialogical anthropology creates a world, or an understanding of the differences between two worlds that are apart (Tedlock 1983).

<sup>v</sup> Razak, V. 1998. Dialogues: Sign-post Conversations with Aruban Consultants. Unpublished manuscript.

<sup>vi</sup> With regard to this view of culture, the work of Anthony Cohen, Jean-Paul Dumont, Catherine Ewing, Clifford Geertz, Erving Goffman, Stuart Hall, David Howes, Barbara Myerhoff, Michelle Rosaldo, Marjorie Shostak, Barbara Tedlock and Stephen Tyler, have influenced my theoretical thinking.

<sup>vii</sup> Actually, the Islands of Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire were always a part of the mainland and are still claimed by Venezuela (Giacalone 1990). The subject is only rarely addressed, however, since cultural and economic cooperation between the territories are of mutual benefit.

<sup>viii</sup> Nydia Ecury (1984) *Kantika pa mama tera* (Song for Mother Earth). Curacao: Intergrafica. And, Tico Croes (1996) *Potret di un cara desconoci* (Portrait of an Unknown Face). Oranjestad: Diario.

<sup>ix</sup> Several archaeological investigations of the area have been conducted including those by Josselin de Jong (1920), Tacoma (1959), and Van Heekeren (1960). Summations of their findings on Pre-Colombian Aruba can be found in Phalen (1977), Kalm (1974) and Green (1969).

<sup>x</sup> Primary and secondary urn burial, stone celts, axes, hammers, mortars and pestles, grinding stones, shell beads, and pendants. Plain pottery ware, bowls and jars with corrugated necks; decorated by incision, impression of knotless netting, relief and modeling. Painted pottery (black on orange, black on white), with designs of straight and curvilinear lines and dots, comb motif predominates (Kidder 1948:425-429).

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<sup>xi</sup> Aruba's contribution to the Dutch West India Company consisted of an annual shipment of skins, animals, and salt meat (Hoyer 1945:4).

<sup>xii</sup> There was a commander appointed by the company, and a few soldiers, governing the inhabitants. Each person was granted a plot of land suitable for raising crops and animals. In return, the licensee was obliged to render service to the Company by chopping wood and taking care of livestock (Hoyer 1945:4).

<sup>xiii</sup> Papiamentu is a Spanish Creole derived from an earlier Portuguese pidgin, much influenced lexically by Dutch.

<sup>xiv</sup> Caiquetio is an extinct language once spoken on the Islands of Curacao and Aruba (Cestmir Loukotka 1968, citing: Pinart in Gatschet 1885:300-302; Koolwijk 1882:227, and Lehmann 1920 (1):42).

<sup>xv</sup> Bendix (1972) notes that Papiamentu incorporates some grammatical and intonation feature common to West African languages (cited in Phalen 1977:66).

<sup>xvi</sup> It is also a fact that the purest strain of the Indian population is preserved in Aruba because African slaves were introduced in smaller numbers compared with the other two Islands. In 1816 Aruba had 564 Indians of pure racial extraction, almost a third of the population; on Curacao there were a few, and none at all on Bonaire (Hoyer 1945:6).

<sup>xvii</sup> The constitutional reform of 1848 stated that the inhabitants of Aruba were also Dutch citizens in an "overseas possession." A colonial council with 5 members and a governor who was the Dutch King's representative were established which reflected this new status (Green 1974:15).

<sup>xviii</sup> Between Aruba and the coasts of Venezuela and Colombia the sea boasts an abundance of fish: red snapper, barracuda, kingfish and sailfish (Hoyer 1945:11). Aruba's soil yields corn, beans, and peanuts (when there is sufficient rain) (Hoyer 1945:11). Cunucu is a Indian term and today refers to a field, vegetable garden, countryside, and to rural areas in general.

<sup>xix</sup> Phosphate was discovered on Aruba in 1874 and exploited profitably until a

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phosphate mining industry became established in Florida after 1892 (Hoyer 1945:10). The Aruba Gold Concessions Company opened in 1900 but closed down in 1908 due to a lack of profitability. A locally backed company, the Aruba Gold Maatschappij, bought out the ailing business and operated the mines profitably until 1916 (Green 1974:23).

<sup>xx</sup> A smaller oil company also opened on Aruba during the same period, the Eagle Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of Royal Shell (Hartog 1961).

<sup>xxi</sup> Later affiliated with the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, which subsequently became the Exxon Corporation.

<sup>xxii</sup> During its peak in World War II, the Lago Oil and Transport Company was the world's largest refinery, producing aviation fuel for the allied forces, refining some 440,000 barrels per day, and employing some 8,300 workers (Green 1974:24).

<sup>xxiii</sup> Dutch was only spoken by educated Arubans, and then only in conversation with the Dutch.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Combined, the Lago refinery and the tourism sector accounted for 75% of the Island's total employment.

<sup>xxv</sup> Hartog has noted also the "intense and strongly developed sense of freedom so characteristic of the Aruban" (Hartog 1961:240).

<sup>xxvi</sup> Croes and Alam have stated that "Aruba made an almost miraculous economic turnaround and social recovery. The economic recovery showed double digit economic growth, a sharply reduced unemployment (less than 5%), improved standard of living, restored social progress and business confidence" (Croes and Alam 1990:99).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Personal communication Stanley Heinze, Albert Arends, and Lydia Emerencia.

<sup>xxviii</sup> The numbers of tourists have had an enormous effect on local culture -- the smaller the Island, the larger the impact. The 1994 population of Aruba was calculated at around 78,000 (including illegal aliens), with tourist arrivals at 611,000 (1994).

<sup>xxix</sup> Aruba was of peripheral interest for the Dutch, who chose Curacao as the seat of government for the six Islands of the Dutch Antilles. Thus, there was no substantial building done on Aruba save a few churches and attractive tiled houses, many of which have been razed, or are in ruins.

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<sup>xxx</sup> Even though the native Aruban elite assert that their white ancestry and endogamous marriage patterns sets them apart from others, even these prominent families absorbed Indian blood. Records support this assumption, noting that in 1806, there were 256 heads of families in Aruba comprising 60 whites, 141 Indians, 10 mulattos, 35 lighter skinned admixtures, and 7 black. But, by 1868, white heads of household had diminished to a mere 1.5 percent of the population (Hartog 1961:111).

<sup>xxxi</sup> According to Hartog, in 1953 there were some 81 Ashkenazim families on Aruba (40 in 1961), 15 Lebanese and 2 Syrians (Hartog 1961:370).

<sup>xxxii</sup> Direct employment at the plant declined from 8300 in 1949 to 5100 in 1960, 1600 in 1972, and 1000 in 1984, just before the closing (DECO 1984:17).

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Since 1985, Dutch nationality has been granted to all children born of a Dutch father or mother (Heeren 1990:222).

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Two technical schools were established, first by Lago, and then by the Island government, to train local workers which enabled native-Arubans to take greater participation, and by 1952, there were 327 Arubans among the 369 foremen (Hartog 1961:315).

<sup>xxxv</sup> The expansion added some 14 new hotel/time-share complexes, the construction of hundreds of government housing units, the expansion of the free-zone, and the building of new highways (DEACI 1989:21).

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Many elite-urban, and urban native-Arubans are light skinned a result of intermarriage between the early European settlers and the Indians, rather than with the African slaves.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> The semantic description of the Aruba Flag is taken from an article in *The News*, March 17, 1994.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> As Rooze has noted, today the Island's "number one enemy is the bulldozer [as many] areas [are] cleared for construction, collection of topsoil or gravel" (Rooze 1982:44).

<sup>xxxix</sup> For example, jet skiing interferes with domestic fishing; rubbish burning near airport interferes with the tourist's first impression; the appropriation of scarce land for a golf course has deprived wild donkeys and other animals of their habitat (personal communication Dirk Jan Boerwinkle, 1995).

<sup>xl</sup> The Caiquetios used to plant a Watapana or divi-divi trees close to every cabin, surrounded by a wreath of torch-thistles or candle-cacti -- a practice which dates from pre-Columbian times (Hartog 1961:11).

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<sup>xli</sup> There is also a weekly “Bonbini festival” or welcome festival, which is a folkloric show for tourists and visitors to the Island which all displays the all of the music, dance, costumes and foods of Aruba.

<sup>xlii</sup> This term coined by first by Robert Faris Thompson (quoted in Bettelheim et al, 1988:36).

<sup>xliii</sup> From the point of view of carnival symbolage, the feathered headdress is "celebratory and naturalistic." And, from a black Caribbean semiotic derived from both African and colonial experience "it represents aristocratic splendor and sovereign power. From the point of view of American popular culture, it bespeaks belligerence and unconquerable pride." (Kinser 1990:226).

<sup>xliv</sup> Canboulay (*cannes broulees*) dates back to the harvest time on the cane plantations when the slaves would burn off the cane stalks. The workers were given some time off to rest after the harvest and so they rejoiced, and picked up the still burning stalks and carried them through the fields and streets. They would have been sooty and covered with sweat and oil from the fires, so today in Trinidad this is the most likely reason that many participates cover themselves in with soot and oil. The custom today still symbolizes freedom, and freedom to celebrate during carnival without restraint from authority or government.

<sup>xliv</sup> In reviewing the various suggested origins for the term “calypso,” Errol Hill concludes that it likely comes from “kaiso” and is a corruption of the Hausa word *kaito* meaning "Alas, what a pity; you get no sympathy; you deserve no pity; it serves you right" (Hill 1967:361). Hausa-speaking Africans formed a significant part of the slave traffic to the West Indies, and the injection of indigenous African language and cultures into Trinidad continued for some decades after emancipation. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that West African expressions found their way into the developing native creole (Hill 1972:61). The term kaiso has also survived alongside its derivation "calypso." The expression is still heard today in the calypso tents when patrons shout their approval of a performance.

<sup>xlvi</sup> A "body piece" refers to the three dimensional part of the costume supported by armature that is worn by the masker over a body costume. A "road piece" is that part of the costume that is pulled or pushed by a masker, usually aided by attendants.

<sup>xlvi</sup> A "kavel" is a highly prized roadside parking site, rented or won through a pre-carnival lottery from which the best view of the grand costume parades can be obtained.

<sup>xlvi</sup> The *Pan Aruban* (refinery newsletter), for example, notes that the Lago Marine Club held fancy dress dances, and that the Pan Am Club presented annual carnival masquerade parties (*Pan Aruban* Jan 17, 1931, Feb. 29, 1936).

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<sup>xlix</sup> The word "*Mamaracho*" is of Spanish origin: *mamarracho* - a sight; a mess; an ill-drawn figure of a man; a grotesque ornament; *mamarrachada* - a collection of rude or ridiculous figures. It is interesting to note also that the carnival of Santiago de Cuba was initially known as *Los Mamarrochos* meaning the "festival of masks" in that country. (Rafael Brea and Jose Millet; "The African Presence in the Carnivals of Santiago de Cuba," *Journal of Caribbean Studies* Vol.10 (1/2) Winter 1994/Spring 1995.)

<sup>i</sup> The Lago oil refinery employed 2074 British West Indians between 1930 and 1951.

<sup>ii</sup> This event was reported upon at length in the newspaper *Curacao Amigoe* (February 20, 1944).

<sup>iii</sup> On VE day (victory in Europe, May 7th, 1945), written accounts state that carnival started spontaneously on Aruba when everyone went out onto the streets to celebrate. However, these festivities are more likely to have been war victory parades.

<sup>iiii</sup> This took place on August 31<sup>st</sup>, and was reported in the *Aruba Esso News* (September 1, 1946).

<sup>liv</sup> *Aruba Esso News* (February, 1947)

<sup>lv</sup> *Aruba Esso News* (February 27, August 31, 1948)

<sup>lvi</sup> *Aruba Esso News* (February 22, 1949)

<sup>lvii</sup> The *Aruba Esso News* reports that in February 1951, the Surinam Club sponsored a carnival in San Nicolas, and in March 1952 groups from the French Islands of Martinique and St Martin gathered for a French-style carnival at the Netherlands Windward Islands Club.

<sup>lviii</sup> A meeting was held on November 23rd at the club to form a central committee to organize the carnival celebrations. Aruba Tivoli Club member G. A. Oduber presided over this meeting in which seven of the twenty eight clubs invited were present. A Temporary Aruba Carnival Committee was formed, chaired by Oduber, with six male committee members : N. E. Henriquez, Jr. (Rotary Club of Aruba) was appointed secretary, A.A. Harms (Caribe Sport Club), Frans Croes (Santa Cruz Social Club), Mr. Panneflek (Netherlands Windward Islands Association), Mr de Kort (Commandeursbaai Club), and Harold Harms (American Legion). Committee members resolved to invite other clubs and associations to participate. These were: Watapana, Lucky Strike, T.C.C., Trappers, Golden Rock Club, Chinese Club, Lago Heights Club, Pova, Lions, Palm Beach Club, and the Country Club.

<sup>lix</sup> La Fama, Antilliana, Lyons Club, Hollandia, Rio Club, Surinam Club, Savaneta

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Kamp, and the Excelsior Brass Band.

<sup>lx</sup> In 1959, for example, over 75 businesses lent their support.

<sup>lxi</sup> The Youth Carnival Committee was established in 1964, with Adison Croes as its president. Since 1975, Modesto Ruiz has been at the helm.

<sup>lxii</sup> Lago ceased operations in 1985 (DECO 1984:17). Direct employment at the plant declined from 8300 in 1949 to 1600 by 1972.

<sup>lxiii</sup> The children's parades are popular attracting over 2000 participants. Themes include educational themes depicting classroom scenes and messages on the importance of education for the Island's future; nursery rhymes; Walt Disney characters; Sesame Street; clowns and pirates; cowboys and Indians; butterflies and flowers; and popular films such as Teenage Ninja Turtles.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Carnival Queen elections in New Orleans are associated with debutante balls and coming out parties in which the daughters of the social elite are formally introduced into society. Rex, New Orleans's Mardi Gras King was escorted by a Queen for the first time in 1873. The carnival season in New Orleans begins on Jan 6, with parades and balls. Secret societies called Krewes, organize the festivities, the best known Krewes are Rex and Comus (Roman God of Joy).

<sup>lxv</sup> "Moko" is a Kongo word and denotes a doctor or healer.

<sup>lxvi</sup> Sailor mas themes included "Flying Saucer Sailors" supposedly embarking on an extra-terrestrial voyage, and, "Oceanic Exploration" featuring sea-life, deep-sea divers, and drowned sailors.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Military personnel from several nations were bivouacked on Aruba during World War II to protect the oil refinery from attack.

<sup>lxviii</sup> The Childrens' elections and parades, which are complete mini-carnivals with Queen, Prince and Pancho, were established early in the history of the festival to ensure that the Aruban Carnival is perpetuated by future generations. Children's groups are often copies of the adult groups. For example, there are the *Paralocitos*, a copy of the adult *Para Locos*.

<sup>lxix</sup> Tambu drum: also called a *bari* (drum) or *cuero* (skin). The tambu is covered with skin on one side only, and played with the hands. The tambu is carried under the arm so as to allow playing while walking, or between the knees.

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<sup>lxx</sup> Chapi: the head of a garden hoe commonly used as a percussion instrument. Held in one hand with the thumb through the handle cavity, it is struck with a single iron rod rhythmically.

<sup>lxxi</sup> Wicharo: also known as wiri or quiro. Percussion instrument of Latin-American origin, including Brazil, Cuba, Mexico. It is made from a serrated gourd, and played by scraping a stick along its surface.

<sup>lxxii</sup> "The Steel Band Arrives." *Aruba Esso News* February 27, 1953.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> "Trinidad All Stars" and "Invaders" were also names of popular steelbands in Trinidad at that time.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> In the 1978 carnival, 18 steelbands were featured.

<sup>lxxv</sup> Latin American bands from the mainland were hired by the wealthier Arubans to accompany their groups in the grand parades.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> Source: *Pan Aruban* newsletter (Feb. 15, 1930). Weekly mimeo of the Pan American Petroleum Corporation (part shareholders in the Lago Oil and Petroleum company).

<sup>lxxvii</sup> Source: *The News*, Aruba, Thursday, January 9, 1997.

<sup>lxxviii</sup> The Trinidadian calypso has been influenced by Spanish music from Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, some French, Irish, and English music forms, and more recently, East Indian and Chinese melodies.

<sup>lxxix</sup> "*handschoen*" Dutch for "glove."

<sup>lxxx</sup> Papiamento for "women wait for rape."

<sup>lxxxi</sup> Papiamento for "young ones are abused."

<sup>lxxxii</sup> "*Hanchi*" Papiamento for "alley."

<sup>lxxxiii</sup> Papiamento for "you have finished your preparations."

<sup>lxxxiv</sup> Spanish for "pretty black boy, let's get together."

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<sup>lxxxv</sup> Although the Trinidadians accounted for the majority of the mas players along with a some Guyanans, the "English" San Nicolas population was rather heterogeneous and included peoples from Jamaica, Grenada, St Vincent, and Dominica, two of whom later became Prime Ministers on their home Islands (Green 1974).

<sup>lxxxvi</sup> When Vera Green was studying on the Island in the 1970s, the social distance between the two groups was still considerable (Green 1974).

<sup>lxxxvii</sup> For example, the hosting of the Calypsonian and Tumba King and Queen contests by San Nicolas and Oranjestad respectively epitomizes the ethnic, linguistic, and regional divisions of the territory.

<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Ironically, in Trinidad too, the carnival is controlled by middle-class Creole leadership rather than the Afro-Trinidadians (Stewart 1986).

<sup>lxxxix</sup> Part of the generic rumba complex. Tumba is part of an Afro-American lexicon including rumba, macumba, and tambo.

<sup>xc</sup> Divi-divi or Watapana tree: (*caesalpinia goriaria*) Tree found in the Dutch Leeward and Windward Islands. Branches grow away from the prevailing wind. Once cultivated for its tannin content.

<sup>xc i</sup> Dera *gai* means "to bury the rooster." The curious custom of burying a rooster and hitting with a stick three times is associated with two Catholic feast days, St Peter and St John.

<sup>xc ii</sup> Personal communication, and presentation "The Essentializing Process." Dept. Anthropology, SUNY, Buffalo, 1996.

<sup>xc iii</sup> The purest strain of the Indian population is preserved in Aruba because African slaves were introduced in smaller numbers compared with the other two Islands. In 1816 Aruba had 564 Indians of pure racial extraction; on Curacao there were a few, and none at all on Bonaire (Hoyer 1945:6).

<sup>xc iv</sup> The last pure-blood Aruban Arawak Indian was absorbed into the native population by 1862 (Hartog 1961).

<sup>xc v</sup> Sergio Velasquez, personal communication.

<sup>xc vi</sup> Vera Green asserts that both foreigners and native Arubans will describe the Aruban as shy and retiring, family oriented, family dependent, and generally passive (Green 1974:35).

<sup>xc vii</sup> Kalm found a difference in the way the native Arubans refer to the Afro-Aruban population. This appears to coincide with "big" versus "little" Island origins: Of the "big" Islanders, the Guyanese are loud and bossy. The Jamaican are too emotional

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and uncontrollable, the Trinidadians are non-conformists and know-it-alls. Of the “little” Islanders, the Barbadians are the most reliable, those from St Kitts are soft and not much trouble, while the people from Nevis and St Vincent are religious and also not much trouble (Kalm 1974:153).